

Submitter: Melanie LandonHays
On Behalf Of: Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Hello!

My name is Dr. Melanie Landon-Hays. I am a professor of Teacher Education at Western Oregon University and currently serve as the president of our faculty union, Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers (WOUFT). I am writing to encourage you to increase the Public University Support Fund from the current \$276 million to bring overall funding to \$1.275 billion. This investment is essential for Oregon's universities to effectively serve all students and maintain quality staffing.

There are so many reasons this is important for the state of Oregon and my students at WOU, specifically:

- Oregon's public universities drive economic growth, innovation, and community development through critical workforce training programs.
- Oregon invests less per student than all neighboring states (Washington, California, Idaho, and Nevada), putting us at risk of losing talent and economic opportunities.
- Decades of underfunding have resulted in higher tuition, reduced student services, and an affordability crisis that burdens students with debt.
- Oregon businesses urgently need skilled graduates, but universities cannot meet this demand without sustainable funding.
- Stable funding prevents layoffs and hiring freezes, ensuring retention of quality faculty and staff.
- This funding will help control tuition increases, improving accessibility for Oregon families.
- The investment will support critical student services, including academic advising, mental health support, and programs aimed at improving retention and graduation rates.

I have so many incredible students who are dedicated to their studies, but find them more and more unaffordable due to decreased state investments. That we are consistently ranked in the bottom 10 of all states for investing in and funding education is discouraging and frustrating, given the benefits that higher education provides to its graduates. Please, please, please increase the amount funded to the PUSF and fund higher education.

Thank you, Melanie