

Submitter: Cate Soulages
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Dear Co-Chair Kate Lieber, Co-Chair Tawna Sanchez, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I'm writing today to urge your support for affordable higher education in Oregon. Without winning public universities that are accessible to every Oregonian, our state can't win. Universities play a critical role in workforce development and social mobility, drive innovation and spark economic vitality.

Today fewer than 40% of Oregonians have earned a degree from any college, and many see higher education as simply out of reach. What will it mean for Oregon's future if such trends continue? We will become the limp outpost of more vibrant economies elsewhere.

The below critical funding initiatives will help ensure Oregon's public universities continue to provide access to affordable education for all students:

Public University Support Fund: Public universities in Oregon are requesting a \$275 million increase to the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) for the 2025-27 biennium for a total of \$1.275 billion. This investment is essential to support student access, affordability, and success.

Oregon Opportunity Grant: Public universities are seeking \$150 million in additional funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) for a total of \$450 million. This is the state's most vital need-based student financial aid program. This funding is critical to safeguard grant aid for low-income students while expanding access to financial support for middle-income students.

Thank you for all you do to ensure Oregon's critical commitment to public education in Oregon. Now more than ever, Oregon must show up for students and the public universities that serve them.

Sincerely,
Cate Soulages