

Submitter: Elijah Kennedy
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 am writing to urge your support for two critical funding initiatives that will ensure Oregon's public universities continue to provide access to affordable education for all students.

Invest in the 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. It will improve academic outcomes, enhance student services, and strengthen workforce connections for students, helping them achieve their full potential and contribute to Oregon's economy.

Preserve Access to the Oregon Opportunity Grant

In addition, 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 main 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. By increasing funding for the OOG, we can ensure that every qualified student has the opportunity to pursue higher education without the burden of overwhelming debt.

These funding increases are vital to strengthening Oregon's higher education system and empowering the next generation of leaders and workers. I respectfully ask for your support of these requests in the upcoming budget.

As a current student and an OOG and Pell grant recipient, I deeply understand how meaningful this support is to lower-income students. Without the OOG, I wouldn't be able to finish my schooling. Now, in my final year of school, I can confidently say that the OOG has changed the course of my life and opened up economic opportunities that I otherwise wouldn't have had access to.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued commitment to public education in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Elijah