



Date: March 26th, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: John Larson

Re: HB 5024

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the committee:

My name is C. John Larson and I am the President of the Oregon Education Association.

The Oregon Education Association (OEA) represents more than 44,000 educators who serve more than 600,000 Oregon students. Our members include educators, specialists, support staff, custodians, and bus drivers. OEA also represents more than 3,000 faculty and classified staff members in 17 locals at 10 community colleges across Oregon.

I am here today on their behalf, and to ask you to provide at least \$647 million for the Community College Support Fund. Like their colleagues at K-12 institutions, OEA's community college members depend on state funding to be able to fulfill their missions. As you know, community colleges play a critical role in workforce development, particularly career and technical education; our members who work at community colleges are also passionate about fulfilling the mission of access and social justice. Faculty and staff members take seriously their role of providing students they support with a pathway out of poverty and a tool for economic mobility—particularly those students who have no higher education alternative.

Unfortunately, if the Community College Support Fund does not receive more than \$590 million from the state over the coming biennium, Oregon community colleges will face devastating consequences. At Lane Community College for instance, our members are concerned about the current discussion of tuition increases that could be as high as 10%, program and service reductions that directly impact students, staffing reductions that could impact dozens of positions, further reduced counseling, advising, and student support services, and difficult choices that are not in the best interest of students, such as outsourcing of the LCC bookstore.

Unfortunately, this budget scenario will also only increase Oregon community colleges' over-reliance on part-time faculty and staff. Part-time faculty already comprise a majority of faculty members at community colleges; yet they have the same Master's degrees and PhDs as their full-time counterparts and deserve and desire full-time, stable employment. Part-time faculty receive compensation at disparate rates, leaving some eligible for food stamps and working multiple jobs to try and piece together a livable wage. They face job insecurity and possible class cancellations on a term-to-term basis. Most receive no health care coverage, even if they are working the same amount of hours at multiple institutions as their full-time counterparts. Like the students they serve, these faculty members often face housing insecurity due to rising rents and difficulty

obtaining mortgages, and they struggle to pay their own student loans. Unfortunately, they're also unable to spend as much direct contact time with students because they frequently lack private office space.

If community colleges do not get the support they need from the legislature in 2019, they will be faced with nothing but difficult options: dramatically raise tuition rates, or start cutting the programs and support their communities and students rely upon. Most likely, colleges will pursue a combination of both. Students, faculty, and staff at community colleges across the state are depending on you; please fund the community college support fund at a level of \$647 million.

Sincerely,

C. John Larson
President,
Oregon Education Association