



Oregon Student Association

Dear Joint Student Success Committee,

My name is Melisa Gomez-Carino and I am student at Central Oregon Community College. I am writing to you all to testify thanking you all for your game-changing investments in k-12 funding. I also want to urge you to support education cradle to career in Oregon and we can do that by including an expansion of the Oregon Opportunity Grant to all Pell-eligible students in this package.

Currently, I am a second-year student at Central Oregon Community College, a member of the Oregon Student Association Oregon Students of Color Coalition, and a member of COCO's dreamers club. I graduated high school in the spring of 2017 in Bend, OR, and then decided to go Central Oregon Community College in the following fall. I decided COCC would be the best option for me because it would allow me to stay at home and save money. However, paying for college, even at COCC, has been one of the most stressful experiences of my life. I was able to receive the Oregon Opportunity Grant my first year of school, which helped tremendously with paying for my tuition. However, my Oregon Opportunity Grant was cut for this year, even though my financial situation had not changed at all. This has led to me having to work two jobs while juggling school and caring for my sick mother. I currently work over 30 hours a week at a starbucks and an accounting firm, which has made it very difficult to prioritize my school work but has been my only option to avoid taking out loans.

Having access to the Oregon opportunity grant made pursuing education a lot more realistic for me, and losing it has forced me to put holds on pursuing education beyond COCC. I was planning on transferring to the University of Oregon next fall. However, since I do not have

OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

The Oregon Student Association (OSA) is a statewide, student-led advocacy and organizing non-profit established in 1975 to represent, serve, and protect the collective interests of students in postsecondary education in Oregon

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access to the OOG anymore, I will have to take next year off and save up, hoping I will have enough by the fall of 2020.

Including an expansion of the Oregon Opportunity Grant in the revenue package could add all pell eligible recipients to the grant, which are students who are most in need of greater financial support, just like me. This could mean 16,000 students in Oregon knowing they have the opportunity to stay in school, and continue to pursue their goals of completing higher education. Including this expansion could be the difference between me being able to continue to pursue higher education or not. Thanks again for your wonderful investments in k-12, which I value and fully support as a graduate of k-12 education in Oregon. Please show your support for Oregon students by including an expansion of the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Thank you for your time.

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