



To: House Committee on Education  
From: Venus Barnes, Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon  
RE: Support HB 4055 - Oregon must address food and housing insecurity on our campuses  
Date: February 6, 2020

---

Chair Doherty and Members of the Committee,

My name is Venus Barnes, and I'm the SNAP Outreach Coordinator for Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon. We envision an Oregon where everyone is healthy and thriving, with access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. To bring that vision into reality, we raise awareness about hunger, connect people to nutrition programs, and advocate for systemic changes.

College students should be able to focus on pursuing dreams for their families and communities. Yet too many students have to worry about not having enough to eat, or having a safe place to sleep. I know all too well what it's like to be a student, juggling the societal perception of student life and the reality of having to survive the outstanding rising cost of everyday living in Portland. Food and housing insecurity are disrupting student outcomes both in Oregon and nationwide, keeping students like me out of school.

In Oregon, studies conducted at Oregon State University, University of Oregon<sup>1</sup>, Portland State University<sup>2</sup>, and Western Oregon University<sup>3</sup> have shown that **more than half of the college students at these institutions experience food insecurity**. This is in line with national data that shows nearly half of college students experienced food insecurity in the last year, and more than half experienced housing insecurity<sup>4</sup>.

It's because of this that **we urge your support for HB 4055**. HB 4055 requires the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) to conduct a study to provide an in-depth understanding of the prevalence of food and housing insecurity across all Oregon public

---

<sup>1</sup> Tegethoff, Eric; Public News Service, July 24, 2017. Starving Students? An Unfortunate Trend on College Campuses <https://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/58649-1>

<sup>2</sup> Cole, Jessica, Portland State University, Committee for Improving Student Food Security, updated 3/16/17. [https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/sites/www.pdx.edu.student-access-center/files/PSU-Info\\_CISFS-SFI-Info\\_v03.16.2017.pdf](https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/sites/www.pdx.edu.student-access-center/files/PSU-Info_CISFS-SFI-Info_v03.16.2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Patton-Lopez, Megan et al, Western Oregon University, 2014. "Prevalence and correlates of food insecurity among students attending a midsize rural university in Oregon." <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24406268>

<sup>4</sup> Goldrick Rab, et al., Temple University, 2019. <https://hope4college.com/college-and-university-basic-needs-insecurity-a-national-realcollege-survey-report/>

universities and community colleges, and report back to the legislature on long-term policy and budgetary proposals.

The bill has two main components:

- It asks colleges to provide data and the ways that they are addressing food and housing insecurity for students at their schools and compares this with national trends.
- It provides recommendations for new policies, including budgetary increases, to help combat food and housing insecurity on Oregon's campuses.

Hunger on campus is not just a romanticized notion of students eating ramen noodles as a rite of passage. It is parents pursuing associates degrees skipping meals while working day jobs, going to school in the evenings, and doing the hard work of parenting. It is students formerly in the foster system who lack the stability of consistent housing. It is first-generation college students doing everything possible to mitigate student loan accumulation in an age of runaway costs of tuition, room and board.

There is nothing kind about homelessness. There is nothing kind about hunger. There is nothing kind about desperately trying to find the resources needed to finish your education and accomplish a ticket out of poverty. Our students should have equitable access to basic human needs like shelter, and food so they can focus on school. I urge you to please support these efforts you all hear on **HB 4055** and invest in our college students for a better future for Oregon.