

Chair Alonso León and Members of the Joint Task Force On Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education:

My name is Erin Sturdivant and I now live in Eugene, Oregon, but I am originally from Oakland, California. I am a University of Oregon student and I am testifying today to speak for students who come from a background that has not historically been well-represented in higher education in Oregon. First generation students, BIPOC students, and others have been underrepresented and I need to speak for them as much as I can. I wish I could provide this testimony in person, but as a busy college student in the middle of the term I am unable to.

Attending college is significantly more expensive than it was just a few decades ago. One of the most important things you can do to support students from underrepresented backgrounds is to make investments in student financial aid.

The Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) is Oregon's largest state-funded, need-based grant program for college students. It is the state's only need-based aid program. Approximately 40,000 students receive Opportunity Grants each year, yet funding limitations have meant that the grant is not available to thousands of students who demonstrate significant financial need. Funding for the OOG should be increased in order to provide a realistic possibility of college affordability for Oregon's lower- and middle-income students.

Today's student populations are diverse, and our campus communities are diverse. For example, the campus community at Portland State University is very different from the campus community at UO, and we need student success services that are reflective of those differences. Services that serve specific student needs because of those differences. I hope you will provide investments with accountability measures to campuses that will allow them to support their individual student populations.

Thank you for serving our state, and our community. The experience of today's students is very different than it was 10, 20, 30 years ago, and our university communities look very different. I very much appreciate your time and continued support for student success.

Sincerely,
Erin Sturdivant
UO Legislative Scholar