



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

April 12, 2021

Co-chairs Senator Johnson, Senator Steiner Hayward, and Representative Rayfield
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support PUSF and SB 551/HB 3007 Support Access to Health Care

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, our collective bargaining chapters at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Institute of Technology, and our faculty and graduate members across Oregon, I ask that you **please support stabilizing the Public University Support Fund at a minimum of \$900 million and, separately, assure that the most vulnerable and precariously positioned educators in our state have a shot at health care by passing SB 551/HB 3007.**

As a state, we are at a turning point with higher education policy and support. Modernizing our community colleges and universities to keep pace with the kind of changes taking place in California and Washington remains critical as Oregon responds to the advanced educational and workforce training needs of our society. I hope our state government rises to this challenge. As California invests in greater job security and benefits for instructors and lecturers throughout their higher education system, while restricting tuition hikes, ***Oregon risks getting mired in a self-defeating spiral*** of hiking tuition to cover costs, resulting in declining student access. The appeal of Oregon universities declines because they are no longer a relative bargain. Meanwhile, administrators make poor human resource decisions as a way to curtail costs. Job conditions remain under constant stress, salaries and benefits for most remain far below their peers in neighboring states or in the private sector. These conditions compound other symptoms of a poorly funded higher ed sector, negatively impacting quality for our students. Is this the direction we want for Oregon? **We need to fund the PUSF at a minimum of \$900 million to prevent things from getting worse.**

Faculty who work part-time at one institution and part-time at another (and possibly another) is full time work. It is also a vital public service. These faculty already earn low salaries. But no benefits such as health care? Unfortunately, it is not only my colleagues who are impacted by this unethical arrangement, but also my former students who now seek careers in higher education. Scrambling, often with a family and student debt, to put together a living wage is incredibly disheartening. It is unjust and immoral that a rich society can train someone to provide an educational service to the society and then not provide basic livelihood and benefits. *NOTE: this is very different than the part-time instructor who teaches truly part-time and has a primary vocation, say in welding or architectural design, but offers to students their talents on a*

part-time basis for a part time salary and no benefits. Is this the kind of higher education workforce our state wants to model for the workforce of the next generation?

Over and over again, we have seen that students, faculty, and administrators want to see the right thing done: be fair and just in the employment of people who provide educational service. ***We need bold leadership to do the right thing. SB 551/HB 3007 is a small step in the right direction. Help take us there.***

The fiscal woes that perennially face our community colleges and universities remains the largest single obstacle to doing the right thing for our students, our higher ed institutions, and the future of our state. **We need to support SB 551/HB 3007 to finally provide healthcare and a robust PUSF of \$900 million to prevent things getting worse.** Please, support **SB 551/HB 3007 and a PUSF of at least \$900 million.**

Shielding students from the disastrous and self-defeating spiral of relentless tuition hikes, **funding our Public University Support Fund at least \$900 million** is smart for our students, for our state agencies, and for the future of Oregon.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. Dreiling".

Michael C. Dreiling, Ph.D.
President, AAUP-Oregon