

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

My name is Hank Skade and I live in Bend, Oregon. I am a proud graduate of the University of Oregon, where I received a Bachelor's of Science and did graduate work in environmental studies. My degree from Oregon has led to a fulfilling 40-year career as an attorney, real estate developer, business manager, organic grape farmer, and environmentalist. Our public universities graduate public servants, scientists, and entrepreneurs like myself who grow companies and create jobs. That's why I respectfully request that you support robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund at \$900 million, and the Oregon Opportunity Grant at \$200 million.

In addition to graduating entrepreneurs, our state's public universities and colleges have played an important role in addressing the major issues facing our state, country, and globe, from the pandemic, to the wildfires and the climate crisis. Reduced funding would challenge UO's ability to continue providing the fast, efficient, and accurate research required to ensure our state's equitable recovery and resiliency.

Further, as a former Board member of environmental organizations in San Francisco and Alaska, and a member of the American Sustainable Business Council, Sustainable Land Development International, and the California Association of Winegrape Growers, I am acutely aware of the impacts of the climate crisis and wildfires on businesses and entire industries, including the wine industry. It is critical that universities have the funding they need to continue producing research to address the crisis and mitigate connected hazards such as raised temperatures and longer, more dangerous wildfire seasons. Budget cuts to higher education would be particularly harmful during this critical time.

Additionally, the success of my career has been determined by my ability to hire an educated, well-trained workforce to support my many business ventures. The health of our state's economy depends on the ability of students to be able to attend college, yet the state of Oregon ranks far behind other states when it comes need-based financial aid. That needs to change, and legislators have an opportunity to change it by expanding the Oregon Opportunity Grant. 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.

Thank you for serving our community. I know you will be forced to make tough budget decisions this session, and I hope you will prioritize funding for public education.

Sincerely,  
Hank Skade