

DATE: 04/21/2021

Subject: Community College funding

To: Sen. Betsy Johnson, Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Rep. Dan Rayfield and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

I am a current nursing student at Clackamas Community College, and I also have an 18-year-old daughter attending CCC as well. As such, I possess an intimate view of what it is like for many students during this pandemic. Tuition and college debt are already unaffordable for too many families. The additive effects of the pandemic and wildfires have made it impossible for many students to even consider going to college due to a lack of financing. I urge you to consider the mental health of these students. Our future work force is in desperate need of hope and direction in their lives, and an accessible education can help them achieve this.

The healthcare industry is currently facing a critical need for more staffing during this pandemic. Community colleges provide specialized training in many necessary healthcare fields such as respiratory therapy, CNA's, phlebotomists, EMT's, medical assistants, and of course, nursing. Nurses are the backbone of our healthcare system. With nurse burnout becoming an alarming reality, it is important to consider the impact of reduced funding to these specialized programs as well.

Expanded, necessary funding will not only mitigate the financial stress of college tuition for all students but may also lessen the bottle neck effect felt by faculty members in these programs; potentially allowing for the hiring of more professors, and thereby increasing student capacity and fulfilling essential healthcare roles throughout Oregon.

I have taken courses at both CCC and Mount Hood Community College and have been impressed with the level of education provided at these institutions. Community Colleges consistently rank among the top schools for nursing. I feel truly honored to be a part of the nursing program at CCC. The nursing school staff has been incredibly supportive during this difficult time. These programs are very deserving of additional support.

Please support \$702 million in funding for community colleges. It makes sense for our students, it makes sense for businesses, and it makes sense for the economy.

It is essential to make community college funding a priority this legislative session. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Hunt
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