

Hello members of the ways and means committee,

My name is Alex Dassise and I am a recent graduate from Portland State University. Today I am asking for you to invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant and \$900 M in the Public University Support Fund.

My college career lasted from the Fall of 2015 to March of 2021. I spent my first two years at Oregon State University where I graduated as the youngest student to finish the Oregon State Advantage Accelerator program, an opportunity for entrepreneurship minded students and faculty. I transferred to Portland State University in the Fall of 2017 where I started working towards a Bachelors of Science in Sociology. My college experience has been the most transformative event in my life. Throughout my entire college career, I received roughly \$15,000 from my family to cover the expenses of tuition and living. In 2016, I started working 40 hours a week to help pay for expenses. This next chapter in my life will consist of paying off student loans and finding my place in society. Today, I work four part-time jobs. I am a contractor for Microsoft, a co-director of a non-profit that works with the developmentally disabled, and I am a caretaker for two different adults on the Autism Spectrum. The opportunity to have a college experience was truly magnificent and has launched me into a world of opportunities. I ask that you invest into the future college students of Oregon so more people can be fulfilled in our society.

Right now, over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Oregon students who qualify for and need the Oregon Opportunity Grant do not receive it, purely due to severe underfunding. If Oregon is going to recover from COVID-19, it is vital that we invest in student aid so that students can afford to finish degrees and find good paying jobs after school. Now is a critical time to get the state where it needs to be regarding financial aid access.

Please remember my story as you work with your colleagues to set the budget for the next biennium. Please invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant and \$900 M in the Public University Support Fund. Thank you.

Alex Dassise