

Good evening. Honorable Co-Chairs, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight. My name is Riley Turner, and I am the student at Portland Community College and a representative on the Board of Trustees.

I am here tonight to ask you and your colleagues to support Oregon's community colleges at a level \$30 million above the co-chairs' framework. I ask this as a PCC student myself -- and I ask this because I can see my peers and the college challenged by the times we are in.

As you know, for many Oregonians, community college represents the best option -- if not the only option -- for students of limited means, students of color, and students from underserved communities of all kinds. For people who want to change their economic situation, find a living-wage career, start on their way to more advanced studies, or simply to live the lives they want to live -- community college is where it begins.

And as you may also know, the same circumstances that make community college the best option for so many people can also mean that those same people are vulnerable to social and economic pressures that make it impossible for them to stay in school. Many students, myself included, rely on things like tutoring and peer study groups for academic support, and on things like emergency cash grants and food assistance for life support.

As a member of student leadership, I'm proud that my fellow students, under our own initiative, have created many of these services on which we rely, and which we support through fees we impose on ourselves. We do this because it's part of the fabric of support so many of us need to avoid dropping out of school, and we do it because it's the right thing to do, the equitable thing to do.

But there's only so much we can do with the resources at our disposal. We can create these means of support, but we can't get them to where they need to be on our own. With more funding from the Legislature, we could expand these services to reach more students, and to give that extra measure of support when it's truly needed. With your help, we can maintain, expand, and make permanent these things which are necessary for us to stay in school and to thrive, and for Oregon's collective investment in community colleges to truly pay off.

Right now, in the age of COVID-19, community college students are struggling. For some of us, the pandemic has put our studies on hold. For others, the technological and economic gaps are just too wide to bridge. The good news is that we can begin to glimpse a COVID-free future, but the burdens of the pandemic will not subside as quickly as the virus itself will hopefully do.

What's more, PCC and our sister institutions in Oregon -- as well as community colleges across the nation -- are forecasting a resurgence in enrollment as the pandemic recedes and something like normalcy returns to our society. We will have more students in community college who will need support to reach their goals, and to ensure that the hope brought on by the end of the pandemic isn't wasted.

We need to be able to help our fellow students. It's what community colleges are about; it's what being an Oregonian is about. I urge you to support Oregon's community colleges at \$30 million above the co-chairs' framework.

Thank you for your time.