

Hello members of the ways and means committee,

My name is Carson Gardner and I am a student at Lane Community College working towards my AAOT. Today I am asking for you to invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the state's largest need based financial aid program.

I receive the Oregon Opportunity Grant. The strain on myself and my family of paying for school during this pandemic is immense. I am lucky in that I have multiple support systems to rely on to help me make ends meet while in school, however the disastrous reality of COVID-19 has strained those support systems, putting great amount of stress on those support systems. The impact on my education of this economic reality has been noticeable, and that impact continues to increase as our economic circumstances continue to deteriorate.

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, and please invest \$290 M in the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Thank you.