

Hello members of the ways and means committee,

My name is Ana Sally Gonzalez Barragan and I am a student at Western Oregon University. 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 received the Oregon Opportunity Grant. The strain on myself and my family of paying for school during this pandemic is immense. In order to afford tuition and fees, textbooks, rent, and food my brother has had to go into debt for me because I do not qualify for federal aid. I have had to choose paying textbooks and class material over for food. I have also had to sacrifice all of my breaks by working 16 hour work days to have enough money for my education. The impact on my education in this economic reality affects me greatly. I have been fully independent financially since I left high school, and the Oregon opportunity grant allowed me to get by by just working part time and having time to focus on my education. As it stands with the higher cost of living, I am more worried about getting my basic needs than about turning in my homework on time.

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.