

HB 2835: Basic Needs Navigators

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and members of the committee,

My name is Theresa Mai, and I am a student at Oregon State University majoring in public policy and psychology.

I am asking you to fully fund SB849. This bill helps address the food and housing insecurity crisis among students at our colleges and universities.

In Oregon, we know that in 2020, about 41% of students were food insecure. This impacts our ability to succeed in school and graduate in a timely manner. How do I know this? I was one of those students. My mother took care of my family with only a low-wage job, barely making ends meet. Coming into college, I knew I couldn't burden my family with the cost of higher education, so I took on thousands in college loans, and I endured days with only one meal at times.

With this experience, it has also impacted every other area of my life. In class, I would pinch my stomach, so my hunger would not be heard across the lecture hall. This only shows how I am focused on surviving more than my academics. Fortunately, I was able to receive food assistance from staff at OSU, so I didn't have to worry about needing to starve myself to afford school. Since then, I was able to receive thousands of dollars in scholarships to stay at Oregon State University, and I could never thank my university enough for the resources they provide to support students like me. Without it, I may not be standing in front of you all today. It's so important that every campus has the staffing support for Basic Needs that we have at OSU.

Remember my story when you are setting budgets and please fully fund SB849.

Thank you,

Theresa Mai