

Dear Education Sub Co-chairs Sen Lew Frederick and Rep Susan McLain,

My name is David Raco. I am a Systems Administrator in the Information Technology department at Southern Oregon University, and I am also the president of SEIU 503 Sublocal 084 that represents the classified staff at SOU. I have been at SOU for over eight years, and I have witnessed firsthand how the state budget affects all of us on a higher-ed campus: faculty, staff, and students. I hope to persuade you today to fund the PUSF at \$900 million, the CCSF at \$702 million, and the OOG at \$290 million so that the effect this biennium is a positive one. I also hope that you will support legislation to fund part-time faculty health insurance (SB 551/HB 3007) and Student Navigators (HB 2835) at our state campuses.

Working during the pandemic has not been easy on staff at our universities, including at SOU where I work. Many of my fellow classified staff must report to campus for work in departments that handle student housing, custodial services, campus safety, and student health, just to name a few. I have been reporting to work two days a week since the pandemic started in IT. We have endured an increased risk to our health from the coronavirus, increased stress on the job from furloughs that have cut into our work week, and in some cases the loss of our jobs due to layoffs. We do not expect miracles from the state during this unprecedented public health crisis, but we do expect a fair shot at financial security for the next two years. As unionized employees we must bargain with the universities for our wages and benefits, but the legislature sets both sides up to be successful when they fund the PUSF for growth, which I hope you will do for the next biennium.

Our students need relief too through the Oregon Opportunity Grants program. In an era of such uncertainty in the world of education, and the world in general, students have valid reasons to be hesitant about enrolling in college right now. If financial aid dries up, they will have yet another reason to delay their higher education to the state's detriment, the universities' detriment, and most importantly the student's detriment. We need to signal to students that higher education is still a priority in the age of COVID. By doing so, we not only help them stay on track to find their place in the world, but we also help stabilize enrollments at a critical time for the universities, so please fund the OOG at \$290 million to support those goals and support HB 2835 to establish Student Navigators at our colleges to help students get all the financial aid they can.

Finally, our faculty across the state deserve a round of applause for what they have accomplished during the past year. They had to pivot to online teaching in record time and support students who have been under more stress than ever before. Many of them are burned out, but they soldier on because they believe in the mission of higher education and the students whom they teach and mentor. All faculty would benefit from appropriate PUSF and CCSF funding, which frees up the universities to offer them the compensation they deserve. Our state's part-time faculty in-particular would benefit greatly from state support for their health insurance via SB 551 and HB 3007. It's unfair that part-time faculty who teach at multiple institutions can't get health benefits even though they are teaching a total volume of hours that would qualify them for benefits at any single institution. It's time we do something about that.

Thank you for representing all of us and for receiving my testimony.

Sincerely,

David Raco