

Committee on Ways and Means  
Education Subcommittee  
Oregon Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and members of the Committee,

I recognize the state of Oregon is faced with difficult budget decisions caused by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 virus. I am reaching out to the Joint Ways & Means, Education Subcommittee to share our company and workforce's views on the importance of engineering education. The Engineering Technology Sustaining Funds (ETSF) enables the states Engineering Programs to continue to increase the number and improve the quality of engineers in the state. Further, the stability provided by ETSF allows each college to invest in key priorities including outreach, recruitment and retention, programs to support a diverse and inclusive student body and student access including reduction of time for degree completion.

For 20 years, the legislature provided Oregon's public engineering and computer science programs with critical support through directed funding. These funds transformed engineering programs in Oregon, supported innovation, and gave Oregon students the training needed to join a competitive workforce.

As you discuss proposed cuts, please keep in mind that the Engineering Technology Sustaining Funds (ETSF) are separate from the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) and reductions to ETSF may limit student access by:

- Reducing Oregon student access to state engineering programs (increased cost and potentially fewer degree choices);
- Increasing student time to graduation (reduced number of instructors and course sections);
- and
- Producing fewer qualified engineers and scientists for Oregon's economic recovery from COVID and sustained regional growth.

The State's historical investment through the Engineering Technology Industry Council, and now through the ETSF, has:

- Tripled the number of engineering graduates in the State;
- More than tripled research expenditures;
- Successfully enabled a focus on diversifying faculty and student populations
- Provided substantial economic mobility for students graduating with engineering degrees;
- Created the workforce fueling industries important to Oregon's economy; and
- Leveraged private donor and industry philanthropic support.

At NW Natural, we rely on the engineering pipeline created by Oregon's public universities, and have hired many of their Engineering graduates during the time that ETSF has been in place and even prior to ETSF. These outstanding graduates have enabled us to provide the essential service of delivering safe, reliable and cost-effective natural gas to 770,000 homes and businesses in 140

communities in Oregon and Southwest Washington. These engineers use their educational knowledge and skills to creatively problem solve some the energy industry's largest challenges.

ETSF funding remains essential for public institutions to provide meaningful access to engineering education, produce graduates to join the workforce, and fuel the economy as we climb out of the current crisis. We are committed to hiring Oregon's public Engineering graduates. We ask that you appropriate the ETSF funding necessary to enable public universities to keep training these incredible students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon G. Huddleston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Jon G. Huddleston  
Vice President, Engineering & Utility Operations  
NW Natural

cc: Joint Ways & Means Committee  
Representative Rayfield  
Senator Gelser