

Ways and Means Road Show
Testimony

Good evening Chairs Federick and McLain, and members of the committee,

For the record, I am Eleazar Gamez, Pronouns He/Him/El. I stand before you as a first-generation DACAmented third-year student at Portland State University. The House bills and budget asks that I am about to talk about are vital for the student success of current college students such as myself and also for our future college students such as my brother and students I work with.

House Bill 2835, The Basic Needs Navigator Bill, would allow for there to be a specific hired individual at each college and university across the state to help students apply for needed assistance programs. Many college students struggle to keep a balance in their academic life due to the hardships they are facing. For example, some of the issues our students are facing are houselessness, food insecurity, and hunger, which occur all across the state and is an ongoing issue that many students face. This bill would allow for students who are facing hardships to meet with this individual and determine what assistance programs they are eligible to apply for. This assistance is long overdue and will improve the lives of college students across the state.

House Bill 2590, the Student Voice bill, would allow for there to be a task force of eight legislators, four senators, and four representatives to visit all colleges and universities across the state. Specifically, this would allow for there to be an established bridge of communication between students from marginalized communities to meet, inform, and show the legislative task force about ways in which there can be opportunities and ways to increase student success with the work and support from the legislative level.

And lastly, I ask for there to be an increased budget ask for the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the Public University Support Fund, and the Public Community Support Fund. I receive assistance from the Oregon opportunity grant, as my Family Expected Contribution is \$0. Additionally, I live in low-income public housing, and I am the head of household for my brother and myself to pay for all bills. Without my financial assistance for school, such as the Oregon Opportunity Grant, it would hinder my pursuit of education as it would impose a greater financial burden on me. The assistance and financial relief that these three funds provide for students right now is tremendous. However, there are countless students across the state who are also in need of this support, and due to the current budget, are not able to receive this assistance to help with their education. In fact, as you may already know only 1 in 4 eligible students receives this grant. Year after year, students continue to have their tuition increased at an alarming rate. Because of this, there should be an increase in these budgets to help alleviate the financial burden.

I urge you to vote in support of House Bill 2835, House Bill 2590, funding to our universities and community colleges, and an increase in budget for public financial aid programs to help

students across the state. The State needs to commit to student success and I believe these are the steps that we need to take.

Thank you for your time and consideration.