



February 10, 2021

Chair Alanso Leon, Vice Chair Weber, Vice Chair Neron,

We are writing today in support of [HB 2835](#). Passage of [HB 2835](#) will provide at risk students with critically needed support to navigate a complex system of agencies by funding a benefits navigator at each community college and public university. Additionally, it supports the Pathways to Opportunity coalition (summits, technical assistance, connections to STEP, revenue development). A benefits navigator is a proven strategy to address the growing basic needs insecurity that is disproportionately impacting students of color, parenting students, and students in rural communities like right here in rural Tillamook County.

We know Tillamook Bay Community College students struggle to meet their basic needs. Our SNAP Training & Employment Program coordinator (STEP), who works with students eligible for SNAP, has seen an increase of students enrolling in STEP and needing support services. In the past two years, participation in STEP increased by 55%, and this year the program has continued to grow. These students are facing many challenges, and it would be hugely beneficial for them to have a navigator that would ensure they are connected to all available federal, state, and local resources.

Food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness are core struggles for TBCC students. In 2019, TBCC students participated in a national survey conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice called #RealCollege. The survey was taken by approximately 30% of TBCC students. Results showed:

- 53% of the respondents experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days.
- 60% of respondents experienced housing insecurity in the previous year.
- 27% of respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year.

For all three of these categories, results for TBCC students were significantly higher than the rates of all survey respondents at two-year colleges nationwide. It was painful to learn.

[HB 2835](#) provides a sustainable funding stream to support a benefits navigator for each campus. As part of the bill, ODHS would provide training and tools to ensure the navigators are able to connect students to as many resources as possible (SNAP, ERDC, OHP, etc.)

There continues to be growing support for [HB 2835](#), from community partners, students, and colleges/universities. We are writing to ask you to please move [HB 2835](#) to a work session. It's a key strategy for an inclusive recovery and economy.

Students need our support. Please help be part of the solution. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rhoda Hanson  
Vice President Student Services  
Tillamook Bay Community College