

Hello Chair Alonso Leon and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Miguel Arellano and I serve as the Basic Needs Navigator at Oregon State University.

I am a First generation college student. I was raised in woodburn. Ms. Leon, thank you for your advocacy and your dedication to woodburn and its residents. I remember my mother would walk to PCUN to have her documents read, until I was able to do that for her. I grew up in farm worker housing- Nuevo Amener. I share a little about myself because, like some of you, Higher education changed the trajectory of my family, and because of that, I now work to support students with similar class backgrounds achieve the same.

In this role at OSU, I help students establish a strong foundation of basic needs, so they can focus on what is important as a college student, and not so much on where they will get their next meal or if they will be able to pay their rent at the end of the month. I coach and guide students through stressful systems and policies that can ultimately decide if they are retained or drop out. Some of these processes include but are not limited to SNAP and medicare applications, referrals to TANF, financial aid appeals so they may have access to federal funds, reinstatement appeals. My role is unique to a social services role, because I also help students navigate college policies and procedures.

In my experience, Oftentimes, students are not aware of federal and state resources they are eligible for, as one student recently said, "Miguel helped me tremendously. I was ready to leave OSU... I don't have family to help me. Miguel helped me get health insurance, walked me through the SNAP application, provided me with a laptop for the term (and) textbooks, and I was awarded the Pell grant with his help. I wouldn't be at OSU if it wasn't for Miguel. I encourage every student to meet with him." This student alone was granted over \$10,800 immediately in federal funds. This is just one of many examples on how I was able to help students access close to \$900,000 in additional resources in my two years in this role. With state support, I only see this number going up at OSU and across all colleges in Oregon.

Unfortunately, COVID has only amplified Student food insecurity among college students. Hitting especially hard first-generation college students whose families have little financial safety net to absorb financial emergencies. If we do not do something to intervene, these gaps will only widen- especially for our BIPOC student populations. However, college food insecurity was an issue long before covid.

My first week on the job, summer 2018, I worked with a pre-med student who was homeless. She had two jobs. When she wasn't couch surfing, she slept in her 1988 Cadillac. When I asked her how she was paying for food, she replied, "well, I am lucky now that cans are 10 cents each. I discreetly look into trash cans during the day, so no one could see me, hoping to find bottles. That's how I pay for my food." I was able to help this student secure enough funds for her basic

needs (none from OSU). This student graduated last spring. I didn't realize how common this experience would become in my position.

Dear committee, by supporting HB 2835, in a very tangible and measurable way, you are ensuring and valuing that every student has the same ability to achieve high levels of learning, regardless of class background.

When education has the ability to change the economic trajectory of students and their families, and close racial disparities, losing students due to the lack of basic needs is something we cannot afford as a state. Through this bill, with little state investment, students will be connected to the resources needed in order for them to learn and thrive and avoid dropping out with debt!

Thank you for your time.

miguel arellano

Basic Needs Navigator, Oregon State University