

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Adam Mennig, I am an administrator at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, OR and a resident of Portland Oregon. I am writing to request your support for **HB2835**.

The needs facing community college students are vast, and have only worsened during the recent wildfires, and global pandemic. According to the 2019 HOPE Center Survey of Chemeketa Community College students, 65% have experienced some form of basic needs insecurity in the prior year. This includes those that are food insecure, housing insecure, and/or homeless.

We know access to higher education creates pathways out of poverty for those most in need in our community. In addition, the ability for students to access education is dependent on their ability to braid State, Federal, Local, and Personal resources together to make the dream of higher education a reality. According to an analysis by the Oregon Employment department, there are 69,900 Oregonians in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties that are Unemployed, or underemployed making less than the state median wage without a post-secondary credential. These individuals currently struggle to navigate the existing resources, and processes across agencies and organizations in order to reach their goal of improved education.

Having a Benefits Navigator on Campus, will bridge these systems in order to meet students where they are, and link them to the resources needed to access and complete college. Having a staff member with the institutional knowledge of the college, along with training from Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Employment Department, and community based organizations will reduce barriers and speed that transition to gainful employment for students.

In addition, through leveraging state funds for these positions with existing federal SNAP 50/50 contracts in place at the colleges, that state can see a \$1.60 return for every \$1 in state investment in these postions. The ability to draw down additional federal funds allows institutions to continue to expand and enhance these critical services for this vulnerable population.

Sincerely,

Adam J Mennig

Director, Academic Development,
Chemeketa Community College