

# Support for HB 3121

## Testimony for the House Committee On Higher Education

March 14, 2023

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Ruiz and McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, for the record, my name is Amy Hofer, Statewide Open Education Program Director with Open Oregon Educational Resources.

Our program promotes textbook affordability for community college and university students, and facilitates widespread adoption of open, low-cost, high-quality materials.

Since Oregon started investing in textbook affordability in 2015, we have seen measurable success:

- Our grant program has saved students over \$17M since 2015<sup>1</sup>
- About 20% of courses offered in the 19-21 biennium were marked as no-cost or low-cost, representing student savings of almost \$50M<sup>2</sup>
- Our community colleges and universities have steeply reduced the cost of course materials for two-year transfer degrees and general education requirements.<sup>3</sup>

Our evidence shows that support for affordable course materials is effective and high-impact because spending on textbook affordability has a multiplier effect such that each dollar in state funding spent continues to generate student savings year after year.

There are many ways to address high textbook costs but we focus on one innovative approach: open educational resources (OER). OER are available free online or in print at low cost. The

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<sup>1</sup> [Continuing Savings from Past OER Grants \(Second Report\)](#) and [Fall 2022 OER Grant Update](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Estimated 2019-21 Student Savings in No-Cost/Low-Cost Courses](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Six Years of Community College Cost Savings: Impact of statewide funding for textbook affordability](#) and [Two Year Followup: Course material costs for four-year degrees at Oregon's universities](#)



content creator retains their copyright and also adds an open license giving future users permissions that afford faculty the academic freedom to customize their course materials.

There is a large library of high-quality openly licensed textbooks and other course materials that can be adopted as-is. John Hilton conducted a meta-analysis of the papers published on the efficacy of OER for student outcomes and concludes:

If the average college student spends approximately \$1,000 per year on textbooks and yet performs scholastically no better than the student who utilizes free OER, what exactly is being purchased with that \$1,000?<sup>4</sup>

In addition to adopting or adapting existing OER, in many cases Oregon faculty are motivated to create their own open textbooks and curriculum. Here are some of the reasons why:

- They would rather receive a one-time grant or stipend instead of future royalties which may be negligible
- They receive credit towards tenure or promotion for their publication
- They want to tailor their curriculum to their course needs
- They philosophically want to freely share their knowledge and expertise
- The increased readership of open access publishing expands the impact of their scholarship.

The CSL increase in HB 3121 is aligned with the Joint Task Force on Student Success Affordability Work Group recommendation. This investment would result directly in accelerated student savings through grant awards and stipends for faculty. We would also be able to increase our work on large-scale projects ensuring that materials are not just affordable, but also high quality: relevant, aligned with course outcomes, accessible, and designed with an equity lens.

I hope that you will support Oregon's textbook affordability program by voting yes on the funding increase.

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<sup>4</sup> Hilton, J. (2016). Open educational resources and college textbook choices: A review of research on efficacy and perceptions. *Educational technology research and development*, 64, 573-590.

