

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Kaitlin Hakanson, I am an adjunct faculty at Oregon Tech. I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment, which will help make critical investments in Open Oregon Educational Resources, Oregon's statewide textbook affordability program.

I first learned about OER while teaching at Klamath Community College. After being asked to update the textbooks for my courses, I started doing research. I was shocked by how much the price of textbooks had gone up in just a few years. My anxiety about asking students to pay these prices was starting to get to me. Fortunately, Amy Hofer from Open Oregon was hosting a workshop about OER at KCC, so I decided to sign up.

Once I learned that switching my course materials to OER saved students money, I couldn't go back to print textbooks. New teachers rely on the materials that are already out there to teach their courses. We also want to make sure the textbooks have up-to-date information and are interesting to students. I live in Klamath Falls, which makes it difficult to stay in touch with people teaching the same courses as me that could help me decide on materials. However, grant funding, training, and networking opportunities offered through Open Oregon inspired me to find OER materials for my courses, and to get involved in multiple OER writing, editing, and publishing projects.

After just one term using OER, students shared with me that it was the first time they read the materials for the class. Having the textbook in an online format they could view on their phone truly made a difference. An older student was able to get rid of her magnifying glass because she could zoom in on the text of the book instead of trying to read tiny text on a page.

The fact of the matter is that college students today face many challenges that I did not face. For students that are paying their own way through college, and taking out loans, the burden of paying for textbooks can cause a financial crisis.

Imagine all of the students who had already begun their college career, making ends meet financially, but then having to adapt and overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. It wasn't easy as a teacher, either. However, thanks to my experience working with Open Oregon, I felt confident finding no-cost activities, videos, and reading materials that gave us the opportunity to explore complex topics together. Experience with OER makes students and teachers more resilient, and that's why I hope I can count on your support of HB 3121 with the -1 Amendment.