



Oregon Tribal Student Grant

03/21/2023

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruiz, Vice Chair McIntire, and members of the committee,

My name is Nick Keough, and I am the Legislative Director of the Oregon Student Association. **I am writing you all today to ask for your support on HB 3565 and the Oregon Tribal Student Grant.**

Oregon Student Association represents and advocates for the collective interests of students in postsecondary institutions in Oregon. We strive to build a post-secondary education system that is equitable, affordable, and accessible for all Oregonians.

As I am sure this committee is aware of, higher education in Oregon has an affordability crisis. Tuition, mandatory fees, student housing, textbooks, and other costs associated with college have skyrocketed in cost over the last few decades. Consequently, this has resulted in students and their families, increasingly applying for student loans, and going into substantial debt to afford a college education.

While this negatively impacts all students pursuing a higher education in Oregon, there is clear evidence that underrepresented students and our most marginalized community members are disproportionately impacted by the college affordability crisis. For Native American and Indigenous students in Oregon, this is particularly true. **According to data from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, only 45% of Native American students who enroll in a public university complete a bachelor's degree within six years. That compares to 68% of all students statewide in Oregon.**

The Oregon Tribal Student Grant (OTSG) is working to fix this. The Oregon Tribal Student Grant helps pay for **most or all college-related expenses** for to members of Oregon's nine federally recognized tribes who are pursuing their first Associate, Bachelor's, or Graduate degree.

When the initial one time-funding for the OTSG was approved during the 2022 Legislative Session for the 2022-23 academic year, Oregon took an important step forward in breaking down some of the barriers that keep Native American students from accessing higher education. As of January 19th, 2023, 535 students have been authorized to receive grant funds. This will undoubtedly change the lives of these students, and is something the state should be incredibly proud of.

It is for these reasons that the Oregon Student Association strongly supports the continuation of the Oregon Tribal Student Grant and the passage of HB 3565.

Thank you,

Nick Keough
Legislative Director
Oregon Student Association
nick@orstudents.org

OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION

635 NE Dekum St, Portland, OR, 97211 | (817) 889-0787 | www.orstudents.org | @OregonStudents