



# American Association of University Professors

*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

April 4, 2023

Senator Lively, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 3499 - Support

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs McIntire and Ruiz, and members of the Committee,

I am the Executive Director of AAUP Oregon, and I was an Oregon State University instructor for more than a decade. On behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, our collective bargaining chapters at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Institute of Technology, and our faculty members across Oregon, I ask that you please support HB 3499.

HB 3499 fundamentally reimagines what is possible at Oregon's universities and community colleges. Most importantly, by eliminating financial barriers to education and re-examining the necessity of institutional boards of trustees, which have not been the panacea our state has hoped for, this bill re-centers the priorities of these institutions and the state on Oregon's students, staff, and faculty.

As educators, we believe a college education is an important and life-changing opportunity, one that should be available to every Oregonian who chooses to pursue it. However, one of the greatest economic barriers facing our young professionals and prospective students today is ballooning educational debt. Because of this problem, many young Oregonians are choosing to delay their enrollment or not to enroll at all. By removing the financial barrier preventing many Oregonians from pursuing their academic goals and alleviating future generations from the burden of educational debt, our state can help its young adults establish themselves financially and give back to their communities.

This bill also would allow our state to lead the nation in aggressively re-investing in Oregon's middle class. This is because Oregon's universities and community colleges don't just serve young people. They offer working professionals opportunities to earn more in their fields by expanding their skillsets, or to reskill in preparation for entirely new careers based on their evolving needs and interests.

This investment in our state will pay dividends for every Oregonian, regardless of whether they choose to pursue a university degree. For the good of your constituents, the institutions in your districts, and the communities they serve, I urge you to support HB 3499.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting higher education in Oregon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor Reyes". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Victor Reyes  
Executive Director, AAUP Oregon