

Submitter: Kayla Snell  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Measure: SB5506

My name is Kayla Snell, and I live in Eugene, OR. I am a freshman at the University of Oregon and a Legislative Scholar. As you are making essential budget decisions this legislative session, I encourage you to support Oregon's students through robust investments in public higher education, including funding the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) of \$1.05 billion and increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) by \$200 million.

The University of Oregon has provided me with innumerable resources, including networking opportunities that have helped substantiate my interactions in the Oregonian community. I love Oregon; its climate, its safety, the prioritization of fundamental human rights, and - above all else - its people. And yet, my year-to-year commitment to Oregon depends entirely on financial assistance; I'm only permitted to receive an education, to better myself and my community as long as I have the assistance to do so. The cost of tuition requires that every student take on debt, and even with my commitment to over \$40,000 in student loans, I cannot afford the cost of attendance. When my savings are spent in two years, I will need to disenroll from the U of O, leaving my prospective Senior thesis, my ability to graduate from the Clark Honors College and pursue the University of Oregon School of Law, and my networking prospects for work.

I'm pleading that the Ways and Means Committee prioritizes higher education because my closest friends, those made at the U of O, have already had to disenroll and move home from the weight of tuition. Hearts have already broken from separation by financial barriers which exclude and expand representation's socioeconomic and cultural disparities. And if it wasn't prioritized when we had a great budget, whose to argue it will ever become a priority? The state legislature must see the significance of investing in us. Invest in me. I intend to be a voice and an advocate for Oregon; I intend to pursue law and advocacy; to pursue forensic psychology; and, lastly, to place my efforts in rehabilitation for incarcerated individuals, in research for veterans with PTSD who have long been ignored, and in the state of Oregon to promote lasting social reforms and impacts which will create a more just society.

It is a temporary cost for the greater prosperity of Oregon. It is an investment so that, one day soon, Oregon will have the workforce, the believers, and the initiative to take on the other issues facing the Ways and Means Committee, but it starts with education. It starts with the belief in our student body that if you invest in me, I will do my due diligence by you.

Oregon ranks 45th in the country for per-student state funding of public universities and invests less than half the national average in financial aid per public university student. As Oregon's students and workforce continue to face lasting impacts from the pandemic, we must ensure that higher education is more attainable for every student.

In addition to investing in the PUSF and OOF, I encourage you to sustain funding for the tribal student grants, which help fund undergraduate tuition, housing, books, and other costs for an eligible, enrolled member of Oregon's Tribes.

Thank you for your service to our state and for supporting Oregon's students and public high education institutions.

Sincerely,  
Kayla Snell