



# American Association of University Professors

*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

April 21, 2023

Senator Steiner and Representative Sanchez, Co-Chairs  
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and members of the Committee,

I am Professor of Education Studies at the University of Oregon, and I am proud to Chair the Politics Committee for my union, United Academics of UO. I also represent my union on AAUP Oregon's Legislative Committee. As a concerned public educator, lifelong beneficiary of public education, and on behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, I urge you to support better higher education funding in Oregon's budget for the next biennium. Specifically, we call on you to appropriate \$1.05 billion for the Public University Support Fund, \$855 million for the Community College Support Fund, an additional \$25 million to provide crucial support to the Technical and Regional Universities and Portland State University, and \$400 million for the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

This country has seen a decades-long decline in higher education investment, which has led to skyrocketing student debt, plummeting student enrollment, and stagnating wages for university workers. We feel these national trends even more keenly here in Oregon due to our state's insufficient support for higher education. Of the 14 states in the Western US in 2021, we invested less in our public university and community college students than all but Montana, Utah, and Arizona. This leaves our students choosing not to enroll because they simply cannot afford to come, while faculty and staff leave our institutions because they simply cannot afford to stay. I received a fine K-12 and undergraduate education from public schools in West Virginia—a state with a third of Oregon's GDP, half of Oregon's population, and fewer college graduates. And yet, the legislature in my home state invests a greater percentage of their tax revenue in higher education than Oregon does.

As a state, we can no longer ignore this problem. Every dollar spent today on Oregon's students is an investment in our state's present and future. By appropriating \$1.05 billion for the PUSF, \$855 million for the CCSF, and \$400 million for the OOG in the next biennium, our public institutions have the opportunity to chart a path out of this national crisis and facilitate student access and success in higher education. Furthermore, Oregon's TRUs and PSU have faced unique challenges throughout the pandemic, and in recognition of the vital role they play in their communities, our state must furnish them with an additional \$25 million in bridge funding.

Finally, in solidarity with my non-tenure track colleagues and the members of UO's Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, I urge you to support the part-time faculty healthcare fixes in HB 2611A and authorize access to SNAP benefits for graduate employees by supporting SB 609A. These pieces of legislation will ease some of the unnecessary burden placed on both these important parts of Oregon's higher education community.

Thank you for supporting the students, staff, and faculty at Oregon's public universities and community colleges.

Lisa A. Mazzei  
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Professor, Department of Education Studies  
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