

My name is Christine Anderson. I am in my final term at the University of Oregon and hope to go into the UOTeach program this summer to become a high school civics educator. I will be thirty-three years old by the time I earn my bachelors in June, and I will be the first person in my family to do so. In all but my first term at UO, I have been a recipient of the Oregon Opportunity Grant. Even though I didn't know it existed, I earned that grant through my hard work climbing over class barriers. The only reason that I am able to attend a higher education institution as a full-time student only needing to work part-time is the financial assistance that I have been able to receive for being who I am: a working-class daughter, a returning adult student, a low-income individual, a first-generation college graduate.

There are some really important budgeting decisions being made right now in terms of those programs I have benefited from and I worry that the weight of what is cut is not fully understood by those making those decisions. What we are asking for, instead, is for 1) to be genuinely listened to fully and holistically, 2) for funding of the Public University Support Fund to be sustained at \$1.05 billion and 3) an increase of the Oregon Opportunity Grant of \$200 million.

As I understand it, this higher education budget decrease being proposed will affect those programs that are trying so desperately to bridge a class divide and bring in a wider array of students to throw into the pool of multi-generational collegegoers and high-income earners. Diversity of class, age, background are things that our democracy and our society depend deeply upon. Keeping sustained funding in those programs that assist in this societal growth is understanding the long game that needs to be played in order to allow those like myself, who are not exposed to the opportunity of going to college and who quite literally do not know that these programs exist, moving upward in terms of education and opportunity. And now, before many

are even able to benefit from them, they are being discussed as targets of excess. Democracy is not excessive. It is a privilege that we are scarcely grasping to hold onto. By cutting programs to help so-called “non-traditional” students, we are submitting to end the fight to expand empathy into a wealthy society that is having a visibly difficult time seeing the ground that it stands out. Oregon ranks 45th in the nation for funding higher education, presenting an already narrow lane for upward mobility. My students, my students’ future students, all depend on keeping this lane open. There is so much at risk. I implore you not to make this blind mistake. See me. Hear us. Cutting higher ed would be the wrong move and it will have devastating consequences. They may not be seen from a seat of privilege, but there will be people like me who will never even have known what was on the table before it was packed up and taken away. But now, at least, you all will.

Thank you for your time.