

Good evening Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the committee. To introduce myself, my name is Rook Smith, I use they/them pronouns, and I am a student at Southern Oregon University majoring in Sociology and Anthropology and minoring in Ethnic and Racial Studies.

By choosing to better fund higher education in Oregon, you are choosing to better the future of Oregon and all those who choose to learn here. I am an out-of-state student who chose to study in Oregon because I saw a community that stood together and supported their own, something I was desperately missing in Ohio. The opportunity to learn from experienced instructors and alongside my passionate colleagues is something I am profoundly privileged to have. Unfortunately, not everyone is able to continue down this path. I have been witness to a number of devastating events due to the cost of college during my time studying here. I have seen peers skip meals, skip class, and lose sleep in order to save money or juggle shifts at their many jobs to pay for tuition. Students should not have to compromise their livelihood or well being in order to pursue their education.

Will Oregon choose to stand for their students, stand for the future of the state and its constituents? Will you provide the \$1.05 B ask to not only meet service level needs, but also meet the ever increasing inflation costs in our country?

I hope to see your action on this issue and your investment in educational expenses for the future of Oregon.

Thank you for your time and consideration, have a lovely night.