

My name is Kord McCray, and I live in Eugene. I am a third-year law student at the University of Oregon. As you are making important 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) at \$1.05 billion and increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) by \$200 million.

I've been lucky enough to attend two great, public universities throughout my education and it has emphasized to me the importance of increased funding for all education. I work here in Roseburg with a lot of the community's lower-income citizens, most of which were dealt a losing hand from the beginning and have struggled, to no avail, to turn their hand into a winner. I consistently hear that they have been denied the opportunity to obtain a higher education simply because it is unaffordable and that support programs often lack the capacity to help everyone who deserves it. Increased investment in PUSF and OOG will result in more winning hands.

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.

Obtaining a 4-year degree, and beyond, is a crucial step in opening opportunities for all Oregon students, especially those from traditionally marginalized communities. Often, students are balancing meeting their basic needs with obtaining a college degree to support their career goals. Oregon's public universities have been stepping into the gap, doing more with less, and working to support students how they can. But these public universities can only do so much, they need the state to step in to help give all students an opportunity for success.

Funding for Oregon's public universities creates opportunities for Oregon's students and workforce to prioritize the cultivation of a highly skilled society. After multiple years of pandemic-related challenges, students have greater needs than ever before. It is critical for the state to support wraparound services including financial aid, academic support, career development, and basic needs support – including food and housing assistance through Benefits Navigators – to meet the growing needs of an increasingly diverse, driven student body.

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

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

Sincerely,
Kord McCray