



April 24, 2023

Joint Committee on Education
Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Please fully fund Oregon's public universities

Co-Chairs Frederick, McLain, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Milagro, I urge you to invest in Oregon's students through fully funding the Public University Support Fund at \$1.05 billion and increasing the Oregon Opportunity Grant by \$200 million.

Founded in 1985, Milagro is the premier Latino arts and culture center of the Pacific Northwest. Teatro Milagro, its touring and arts education program, presents original bilingual plays and educational residencies to diverse and underserved communities throughout Oregon and the nation.

We know that while a four-year degree is often a critical step in opening opportunities for all students, especially those in our community, many students see college as unaffordable. Often, students, especially those from low-income communities or first-generation college students, are balancing meeting their basic needs with obtaining a college degree to support their career goals. Oregon's public universities have filled that gap and are working to support students, but they need adequate funding from the state to ensure all students have an opportunity for success. This includes state funding for wraparound services such as financial aid, academic support, career development, and basic needs support – including food and housing assistance through Benefits Navigators – to meet the growing needs of increasingly diverse student bodies.

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. A \$1.05 billion budget will allow public universities to continue offering education and services for students without increasing tuition beyond 5 percent at most universities.

Finally, we urge you to increase the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) by \$200 million. The OOG provides financial aid to students who otherwise would be unable to attend a four-year university, giving them the opportunity to complete college and address generational wealth

gaps and economic disparities. As community leaders, we are committed to ensuring all Oregonians, including our Latino community members, have affordable access to higher education, but that access begins with adequate state funding.

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

Sincerely,

José González
Executive Director & Co-Founder
Milagro