

February 8, 2024

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Oregon's seven public universities, we write to express our strong support for House Bill 4162 with the -2 amendment. This vital piece of legislation aims to significantly enhance our institutions' ability to meet students' basic needs, thereby improving their academic success and overall well-being.

The challenges our students face outside the classroom – such as food insecurity, housing instability, and the high costs of textbooks – have profound impacts on their ability to succeed within it. HB 4162-2 proposes a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges by establishing a grant program to assist students with basic needs. This bill will give significant resources to our school's basic needs navigators to remove critical barriers to student success and collaborate with campus leaders on how to best provide resources to our communities.

In 2021, the Oregon State Legislature made a significant stride towards supporting student basic needs by passing the Benefits Navigator Bill, which funded positions to help students navigate public assistance programs. With most navigator positions now filled the success of these efforts has become evident. The experience of benefits navigators across Oregon's higher education landscape underscores the necessity for additional support.

Our institutions are particularly supportive of the bill's emphasis on funding Basic Needs Navigators. These positions are crucial for connecting students with the resources they need to thrive. The allocation of \$5 million towards these efforts is a testament to Oregon's commitment to its students and their futures.

We understand that the proposed amendment decouples the Open Educational Resource component from the basic need package. We continue to believe that further funding of the OER efforts align with our universities' ongoing efforts to reduce the cost of education and ensure that all students, regardless of their financial background, have access to the necessary learning materials.

The Oregon Council of Presidents strongly urges the Committee to support HB 4162 with the -2 amendment. By addressing the holistic needs of our students, we can foster environments in which they are not just surviving but thriving. This investment in their basic needs is an investment in their futures, and by extension, the future of Oregon itself.

We thank you for your consideration and stand ready to assist in any way to ensure the passage of this important legislation.