

2025 Student Basic Needs & Workforce Development Package

House Higher Education Committee Presentation - January 28th, 2025

8:00 - 9:30 AM

Oregon State Capitol, Hearing Room C

RUN OF SHOW/SCRIPT:

Arrive at Oregon State Capitol at 7:45 AM. Meet at the South Entrance.

Introduction: Highlight and overview the problem (7 minutes)

Presenting: Alex Aghdaei, Angelo Arredondo, Kai White

Alex: Slide 1

Thank you Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala, Harbick and the rest of the committee. For the record, my name is Alex Aghdaei, and I work for Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon as a campaign strategist. We're here today to discuss HB 3182 and HB 3183, two bills we're collectively referring to as the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act

Slide 2

The support for this bill comes from a variety of organizations – The Student BasicNeeds Coalition represents over a dozen partners including students, universities and colleges, and community partners working together to holistically address student success and completion across Oregon and maximize the impact of our state's investment.

The well-being of students pursuing post-secondary education and workforce training profoundly impacts their sense of belonging, persistence, graduation rate, and overall experience. Our mission is to ensure equitable access to essential resources that support these students' basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, mental health and financial stability. Now, I'll turn it over to Kai to explain how we got here.

Kai: Slide 3 –

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala, Harbick and the rest of the committee.

Hello, I am Kai White, a student Senator at Portland Community College. Students at my college and around the country are facing insecurity in many different ways such as food, housing, textbooks, transportation, childcare, and other basic needs.

A 2023 survey of 3171 PCC students by The Hope Center found that,

- “43% of respondents from [my] institution experienced food insecurity”
- “56% of respondents from [my] institution experienced housing insecurity”

In a 2020 survey of 200,000 students nationwide by The Hope Center found that,

- “34% of respondents experienced food insecurity”
- “48% of respondents experienced housing insecurity”

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission found that “37% of students are facing unaffordability costs in 2022-23”

These issues are systemic, both locally and nationwide. Students have spoken to me personally, as well as responded to outreach, overwhelmingly indicating that these situations still apply, potentially even more severely than the surveys represent.

<https://www.oregon.gov/highered/strategy-research/Documents/Performance/2024-Key-Performance-Metrics-Summary.pdf>

<https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/HopeSurveyReport2021.pdf>

<https://www.pcc.edu/institutional-effectiveness/wp-content/uploads/sites/109/2023/07/RealCollege-Survey-Hope-Center-2023-Survey-Results.pdf>

Angelo:

Good Morning Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala, Harbick and the rest of the committee. For the record, my name is Angelo Arredondo, and I am a student at Oregon State University.

(Slide 4) We do a decent job at helping students get in the door of higher education. However, what we are not doing is helping keep those students in our institutions of higher education. Whether that be a community college student training to be a plumber or a university student studying to become a doctor. These students exist all across the spectrum of needing a basic need met. College is more than just academics. If a student

doesn't have a good meal or can't have a good night's sleep, how can we expect them to perform in the classroom?

(Slide 5) I want to catch your attention with the fact on the screen: more than 50% of college students identify as being house insecure. Furthermore, in a survey conducted by the Oregon Student Association last year. Students from our public universities and colleges identified housing as the number 1 issue that they face as a student. Housing insecurity is as diverse as our student population. I attend OSU, I can't afford to live in Corvallis. As a result I commute 3-4 times a week from my home here in Salem. Gas isn't cheap but it's much more affordable than paying the 900\$ starting price for a dorm or apartment. I have the privilege of having that safety net that allows me to stay in school. A lot of my peers don't have that privilege. They are being priced out of dorms and or apartments. The issue of us not having housing in general also comes up. These students don't drop out because they are struggling academically, on the other hand. These are students with 4.0 GPAs who are our future engineers, lawyers and so on. We lose our future because they can't afford to stay.

Kai: Slide 6 –

Textbooks are often an out of pocket cost for students, anywhere from 0\$ - 600\$.

The Textbook industry is monopolistic, with three companies controlling at least 80% of the market. There is a reduction of used options due to “one time use access codes” for online textbooks, removing the ability for students to find cheaper alternatives.

A 2018 survey of over 21,000 students found that “64.2% of students at least once did not purchase their required textbooks, due to costs”. This is consistent, a 2014 study by PIRG showed that 63% of students did not purchase the necessary textbooks for their course

In 2020 it was found that, “since 1998 course material costs have risen 184% and more than 1,000% since the 1970s”, severely outpacing inflation.

I have personally heard many stories of students completing courses without ever purchasing the required textbook, missing out on a sizable amount of their education because they simply can't afford it. This is about the failure to provide access to students at the lowest cost possible, that is the entire point of a community college like mine.

https://pirg.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Fixing-the-Broken-Textbook-Market_June-20

[20_v2-5.pdf](#)

<https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/the-new-era-of-the-400-college-textbook-which-is-part-of-the-unsustainable-higher-education-bubble/>

<https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/CampusBookCompanyIncetalvMcGrawHillGlobalEducationHoldingsLLCetal?1657896475>

https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/646e59f2d76c6e8c0c5223de/651ed916079423d264335a68_2018%20Student%20Textbook%20and%20Course%20Materials%20Survey%20Report%20--%20FINAL%20VERSION%20--%2020190308.pdf

Angelo: (Slide 7) I am proud to say that at OSU we are one of the leaders in the space of providing basic needs for students. But even being a leader, we still need the funding to support even more students. Our students at other universities and especially our students at our rural and costal communities are being affected even more. I've talked to some of these navigators. They work hard and care for our students. But students fall through the cracks due to our lack of resources, not lack of talent. Our navigators can only do so much with the very limited resources they currently have. They need your support to uplift our students.

Alex: Slide 8

Thanks, Kai & Angelo. For the reasons they've described, we're here for our third year in a row with this ask for targeted one-time funding in three strategic areas:

3182

Student Basic Needs Programming

Affordable Student Housing Initiatives

3183

Textbook Affordability and Open Educational Resources

The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act is a bipartisan, student-centered effort to support student basic needs initiatives, affordable housing initiatives for students, and textbook affordability in Oregon.

I'll turn it over to Zoe, Amy, and Pam to go into greater detail on what those investments could look like.

Basic Needs (Zoe, 5 minutes)

Intro

Thank you Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee. Good morning, my name is Zoe Cooper-Caroselli, I work at Portland Community College as the Statewide Program Coordinator for the Basic Needs Oregon college benefits navigator consortium. I am here today to speak in support of the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act.

Program Background - who we are, what we do - 1st slide

As you've just heard, many Oregon college students struggle to afford food, housing, utilities, transportation, childcare, textbooks, all while pursuing their education, learning, growing and working towards careers that will pay them a living wage. In Oregon, 47 percent of students experience food insecurity, 45 percent experience housing insecurity, and 16 percent experience homelessness (Portland State University, 2019). These challenges disproportionately impact underrepresented students: low-income students, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, and parenting students. Oregon college students are our future workforce, an investment in their success is an investment in all of our success.

In 2021, the Oregon legislature made a groundbreaking investment in student basic needs with the passage of HB 2835, the benefits navigator bill, which funded a benefits navigator at each of the 17 community colleges and 7 public universities, and established a statewide consortium to facilitate sharing of best practices, professional development, and data collection and reporting.

So how do benefits navigators support student basic needs? In many ways! Benefits navigators bridge the gap between students and available resources

- They support individual students by helping connect them to resources and benefits: on campus, in their community, and at the state/federal level
- They build robust relationships with campus, community, and state/federal partners to create a stronger web of student supports and ensure warm-handoffs to resources

- They make colleges better equipped to support students by reducing the stigma around basic needs insecurity and accessing benefits, and increasing awareness

Program Impact - 2nd slide

Let's talk about impact.

Since the program's inception, the benefits navigators have served more than 39,000 students in need at colleges and universities across the state.

Everyday I hear stories from benefit navigators who are working with students who are homeless, or who haven't eaten yet that day, who are facing a basic needs barrier on their educational path and are seeking support. Here's a story to illustrate:

An adult student in the nursing program came to the benefits navigator for assistance. She had a car that needed new tires and repairs and felt like she had nowhere to turn for help. Together, they were able to work with a former student, a local business owner, to get a discounted deal on car repair and tires so the student could continue in school. This student will be a nurse in another year.

In addition to serving thousands of students each month across the state, the benefits navigators have initiated and expanded campus food pantries, brought partners to campus to sign students up for OHP and SNAP benefits, presented in classrooms and to faculty and staff to increase awareness. They have helped students navigate barriers to stay on their educational path and complete their goals. The impact is large.

However, benefits navigators are not able to connect students to all the resources that they need - campus programs are limited, community resources, especially for housing, are very limited, and state/federal programs often fall short of the full need. Benefits navigators need programmatic funding in order to address emergency student basic needs in the moment when other resources are not available, to keep students on their paths, so that they can meet their goals, and become the future of our state.

Program Need - 3rd slide

Currently, there is not sufficient funding for the operating budgets needed to sustain the programs or for personnel costs for Benefits Navigators. The funding we are asking for this session will be used on a one-time emergency basis to strengthen Oregon college basic needs programs by:

- Funding basic needs personnel to ensure continued service levels and expanded program capacity to meet rising need
- Funding for direct student supports, such as providing emergency aid in the form of food, housing and transportation vouchers, childcare subsidies, emergency funds, etc.
- Funding for the creation of or improvements to campus basic needs infrastructure, such as food pantries, basic needs centers, ordering systems, refrigeration, safety upgrades, etc.

We need to invest in supports that address the biggest barriers to college access and success for underrepresented students. Funding for benefits navigators and basic needs programs is critical to addressing the increased basic needs insecurity.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate the prior support from the legislature and look forward to being able to continue to offer and grow these important services to support student success.

Open Educational Resources (Amy, 5 minutes)

Slide 1

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbrick, and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Amy Hofer, Statewide Open Education Program Director with Open Oregon Educational Resources.

Open Oregon Educational Resources is our statewide textbook affordability program for community college and university students. We facilitate widespread adoption of open, low-cost, high-quality materials. You can visit the openoregon.org website for more information showcasing what's happening across the state.

Slide 2

As you are aware, we have a problem: textbooks cost so much that students can't afford to buy them. Research shows that unaffordable textbooks limit student success and increase student debt.

This is why Oregon has invested in a statewide textbook affordability program for 10 years. Here are a few examples of our demonstrated track record leveraging state resources to save money for students:

Slide 3

Since 2015, no-cost/low-cost materials created with grants from Open Oregon Educational Resources saved students \$25 million, representing \$11 in student savings per program dollar spent.

The average materials cost for the community college Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree is 47% lower than when the statewide program began in 2015.

Courses with the no-cost and low-cost designation in the schedule represent cumulative savings of \$150 million from 2017-23.

Our evidence shows that support for affordable course materials is effective and high-impact because spending on textbook affordability has a multiplier effect such that each dollar in state funding spent continues to generate student savings year after year.

Slide 4

Here are a few of the things that the statewide textbook affordability program does to make textbooks more affordable.

Oregon is a national leader in open education because of our well-developed community of practice.

We regularly offer professional development and grant opportunities for faculty to support innovative course redesign with no-cost and low-cost course materials.

And we offer policy support. We work with each community college and university to implement legislative requirements and assess their impacts.

Slide 5

However, there is still much more that we want to do. The state investment in our program has been flat since 2019. With an ongoing program funding increase, we can:

Expand our grant program at ~\$11 in student savings per \$1 spent. We will put out a call for grant proposals and fund new projects to adopt, adapt, and create open educational resources.

Expand professional development for faculty at up to ~\$50 in student savings per \$1 spent. We will offer additional on-ramps for new participants to write peer reviews of open educational resources, attend our equity and open education faculty cohort, and

participate in a one-week course redesign sprint.

Develop Oregon-specific course materials for Common Course Numbering courses that are tailored to our new statewide learning outcomes. All of the materials will be available for free online or in print at low cost. They will come with course plans and assessments so that faculty can easily adopt or adapt them.

We would use funding to keep our two existing positions and hire at least two more FTE to support instructional design and project management for statewide open education projects.

This ongoing program funding increase was recommended by the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education. Financial aid rarely stretches to cover course materials, so funding for affordable textbooks is an essential component of a comprehensive statewide affordability strategy. I hope that you will each support Oregon's students by voting yes on this student needs package, and championing it through the Ways & Means budget process.

Thank you for your time!

College Housing Northwest (Pam, 5 minutes)

Chair Hudson and Members of the committee. My name is Pam Blumenthal, and I am Director of the Affordable Rents for College Students Program at College Housing Northwest

I am sure you are all well aware of the housing crisis we are facing in Oregon. However, you may not be aware that college students are often an invisible part of the crisis. Half of college students face housing insecurity and 20% face homelessness. As you can imagine, attending college and obtaining a degree while homeless is incredibly challenging.

Most college students are not eligible to live in traditional affordable housing which makes finding a place to live very challenging.

College Housing Northwest has been working on creative solutions to student housing for over 55 years.

We are a nonprofit focused on minimizing rental barriers, providing student centered support services, and keeping our rents as low as possible.

In the past 3 years we acquired and developed 226 units of affordable housing. We currently own and operate six properties and house more than 1000 students per year.

In 2020 we started the Affordable Rents for College Students (ARCS) program that provides rental assistance to low-income, housing insecure students. We started by helping 20 students and we currently have 125 students enrolled in ARCS.

CHNW and ARCS are partnering with colleges and nonprofits to provide affordable housing and increase the chances that students stay enrolled and complete their degrees and minimize their debt.

We are making a difference in the lives of many students who might otherwise not be able to go to college.

In 2024 we housed over 1100 students, and of those 164 were ARCS student who received 50% or 100% rental subsidies and individualized support.

Most of our residents are students of color and most of the students in the ARCS program are the first in their families to go to college.

Bill Overview & Conclusion (Alex, 6 minutes)

Today, we ask you to stand with us. Help us advance HB 3182 and HB 3183. Show your dedication to the well-being and success of Oregon's students. By doing so, you are not only supporting individual lives but also strengthening the very foundation of our state's future workforce.

Our state is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in workforce development programmes at community colleges and financial aid for students at all sorts of institutions. At UO where I'm in my second-to-last term, half of every pell-eligible student will not graduate on time. By not providing the same support to students' basic needs, we're unable to recoup our investment as students drop out. This bill is a small investment which will drastically improve thousands of students' ability to complete their degree on time and improve the return on our investment in those students.

Not having access to higher education is like being in the stone age, but with no stone. Except, we're in the information age, and we can't access information. How can we expect young people to fill the essential roles we desperately need more of if we can't afford to get educated as teachers, nurses, plumbers, and engineers?

The time to act is now. Let us create a brighter, more equitable future for all Oregonians by passing the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. Your support today will echo in the achievements of tomorrow's leaders. This is our third time making our ask to the legislature, and the data we're reporting only gets more and more dire. When the Oregon Student Association was still around, we surveyed 13 campuses and over 1,300 students about what issues were top of mind for them last spring. No matter how you cut the data – students overwhelmingly ranked basic needs, housing, and textbook affordability as their top three. I'm asking you, as members of the house higher education and workforce development committee, to do the same when you speak with your colleagues about your take-homes for this session. Thank you for your time and we look forward to returning on Feb. 13th for our public hearing with some of those leaders.