

Submitter: Rachel Bridgewater

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce  
Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3182

Chair Huson, Vice Chair Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee,

My name is Rachel Bridgewater, and I am a librarian at Portland Community College. I am writing in support of HB 3182 and HB 3183: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act, which will make important investments in student basic needs initiatives, affordable student housing initiatives, and textbook affordability.

When I began working as a librarian at Portland Community College thirteen years ago, I was astonished by the profound barriers our students often faced while pursuing their education: housing insecurity, childcare challenges, access to transportation, and food insecurity. Regularly, I would be trying to work with a student and learn that they hadn't had any food that day or that they were in the library desperately trying to get a copy of their textbook because they were facing a choice between buying the materials for their classes and paying their rent. These experiences with students led me to become very involved in Open Educational Resources/Textbook Affordability advocacy at the College; I viewed it then, as I view it now, as an ethical imperative.

I wish I could say that in the last decade I've come to see fewer students struggling to meet their basic needs but I have not. What I have seen, and what this bill will support, are gradual but meaningful basic needs support from PCC. As one of the faculty who works on supporting OER/Textbook affordability at the college, I am proud to say that our efforts - mostly made possible by funding from Open Oregon and recently by some local funding - have saved PCC students over \$30 million dollars since 2017. This is an incredible success story that has only been possible because of a willingness to invest in Oregon's future through funding of this work and other critical basic needs programs.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that I can count on your support of HB 3182 and HB 3183: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. Students cannot wait any longer!

Best Regards,

Rachel Bridgewater