

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

My name is Angela Sytsma, and I am the Affordable Rents for College Students (ARCS) Program Manager at College Housing Northwest. 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.

I have the honor and privilege of assisting deserving and talented under-resourced students strive toward their education goals and obtain the knowledge, advantages and access to unlock the doors of opportunity as they engage in the ARCS program providing them with safe, accessible, affordable housing and wraparound supports. However, ARCS is a small program with limited capacity in contrast to the dearth of housing and supports available and the exponential widening of the gap between those in our community with privilege, access, and resources and those without.

I can attest to the importance, value, and generous community return on investment funding of HB 3182 and HB 3183 represent. I can tell you the story of Wyatt*, the nontraditional Clackamas Community College (CCC) student who was living in his jeep, with less than 20 credits away from his AA and near giving up before he engaged with CCC's Basic Needs Hub to learn of our ARCS program and other resources he was unaware of and/or was in need. Today, Wyatt is a CCC graduate and has transferred to PSU, where he is excelling academically and well on his way to graduating with his undergraduate degree. A chance encounter with the Basic Needs Hub made the difference between him giving up and the future he is successfully building. Wyatt was reluctant to reach out to seek assistance because time and time again he shared how "help" didn't answer the door when he knocked.

Or I can tell you about Aliyah*, a young Portland Community College student in her early 20s when she *knocked* on the ARCS door. Aliyah too had those same past experiences of "help" not answering the door. Aliyah (like many of our students) waited a full month before she unpacked her boxes in her apartment as she felt safe, affordable housing was too good to be true. Early in life, she had many experiences that fortified the belief she didn't deserve safe housing and that help did not exist for her. She is far more experienced and wise than her 2 decades of living would indicate. She has known too much disappointment, growing up in an unsafe, turbulent home setting; she struck out on her own at as a teen. Today, she is a proud PSU graduate working full time at a Title I elementary school as she, her partner, and her younger teen brother (who is working to complete his trade credential) are excited to be moving into their own unsubsidized housing and breaking many generational cycles. She shared how hard it is to ask for help when you don't know what to ask for and you are used to being turned away, ignored, and judged for needing help. Today she is proud to be able to both request and receive help and excited to pay it forward as she sets a mentoring example for her younger brother and the young elementary students she enthusiastically works with.

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