

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Oregon State Legislature

February 11, 2025

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee,

My name is Joshua Eastin and I am a faculty member and Chair of the Department of Politics and Global Affairs at Portland State University. I am writing you today in support of HB 3182 and HB 3183: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Acts, which target investments in student basic needs initiatives, affordable student housing initiatives, and textbook affordability.

As a faculty member and department chair, I have witnessed first-hand the challenges our students face in balancing their education with the realities of economic hardship. These bills represent critical investments in student success and the long-term economic health of our state.

Portland State University enrolls a large number of students from historically marginalized and low-income backgrounds. Many of our students are the first-generation college students, and they work multiple jobs while juggling coursework and family responsibilities. Yet, despite their dedication and resilience, many also struggle with food insecurity, unstable housing, and the rising costs of textbooks and other essential learning materials. These barriers are not just hardships; they are direct obstacles to student retention, degree completion, community engagement, and future workforce participation.

The provisions in HB 3182 and 3183 are not only necessary but strategic. When students do not have to worry about where their next meal will come from or whether they will be evicted, they can focus on their studies, graduate on time, and contribute meaningfully to Oregon's workforce and economy. Data consistently show that meeting students' basic needs improves academic performance, reduces dropout rates, and leads to better career outcomes.

As an educator, I see students every day who are eager to learn, determined to succeed, and who are ready and willing to contribute to their communities. But, when they face tradeoffs between academic achievement on the one hand, and paying rent and buying groceries on the other, academics necessarily take a back seat. HB 3182 and 3183 recognize that an investment in students is an investment in Oregon's future. By supporting these measures, you are affirming that higher education should be accessible and equitable for all, not just for those who can afford it.

I urge you to pass HB 3182 and 3183 and ensure that Oregon remains a leader in fostering an educated, skilled, and stable workforce. Please act now; our society depends on it!

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the future of our students and our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Eastin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joshua Eastin, PhD
Associate Professor and Department Chair
Department of Politics and Global Affairs