

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Oregon State Legislature

February 12, 2025

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Isaac Gilman, and I am Executive Director at the Orbis Cascade Alliance, a regional academic library consortium that counts among our members 12 of Oregon's public colleges and universities. **On behalf of our Board of Directors, I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 3183**, the Textbook Affordability and Open Educational Resources component of the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act.

As an academic librarian in Oregon for the past 17 years, **I have experienced firsthand the rising costs of textbooks, and their contribution to the affordability crisis for college and university students; as a result, students have shared that they don't buy their required textbooks**, which has been proven to negatively impact their learning and academic outcomes. This is an experience that is shared by librarians across our Orbis Cascade member libraries, and one that we have all tried to address by broadening access to required course materials through our libraries. Through the Alliance, we have supported these efforts by collectively licensing thousands of ebooks and other learning materials—significantly expanding student access while simultaneously reducing costs for member institutions.

However, despite this wealth of available library resources, Orbis Cascade and our member libraries are limited in our ability to provide access to many of students' required textbooks because publishers will not allow libraries to license them. For students who are unable to afford the cost of required books, and who often turn to their library for access, this means they are left with no options—and so go without their books, and risk negative impacts on their coursework.

Open Oregon Educational Resources steps into this gap by advancing the use of low cost and no cost textbook alternatives—which minimize access barriers and improve affordability for students. By supporting Oregon faculty in creating and openly sharing these textbook alternatives, Open Oregon Educational Resources is consistently contributing to bringing down the cost of education for students at Oregon institutions and to ensuring that all students are able to access the learning materials they need to be successful.

The unique power of Open Oregon Educational Resources' impact is that it extends the capacity of each Oregon institution to support their faculty and students in this transition away from high cost textbooks. Individually, institutions would not have the resources or capacity to make significant progress—this is a message that I have heard repeatedly from leaders at our member libraries. But the Open Oregon Educational Resources infrastructure and support that institutions collectively draw on enable significant progress in their work to increase the availability, and use, of low cost and no cost textbook alternatives. More specifically, since 2015, across our 12 Oregon member institutions:

- Open Oregon Educational Resources-supported work has led to an estimated cumulative **\$25,741,062 in student savings**
- **205,031 students** have benefitted from enrolling in courses that use low cost or no cost textbook alternatives
- **Every \$1 invested** in this work through Open Oregon Educational Resources **has led to an average of \$10 in student savings**

A core goal of the Orbis Cascade Alliance is to collaborate in order to efficiently and sustainably provide broad, equitable access to books and other learning materials for all students across our member institutions. We have harnessed the power of collective efforts to do just that, and we see the same power—in service of the same goal—reflected in the work of Open Oregon Educational Resources. **With such a clearly demonstrated return on investment, the impact that the requested funding could have for Oregon students is undeniable.** HB 3183 is an opportunity for the state to invest in a program that is proven to reduce financial barriers to learning, and to ensure that every student is able to fully benefit from their educational experience.

Thank you for your time and leadership, and for your care for the basic needs of Oregon college and university students. We urge you to pass HB 3183 and to continue to improve the affordability of public education in our state.

On behalf of the Orbis Cascade Alliance Board of Directors,

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Orbis Cascade Alliance: Oregon Public Institution Members

- Chemeketa Community College
- Clackamas Community College
- Eastern Oregon University
- Lane Community College
- Mt. Hood Community College
- Oregon Institute of Technology
- Oregon State University
- Portland Community College
- Portland State University
- Southern Oregon University
- University of Oregon
- Western Oregon University