

February 14, 2025

Chair Hudson and Members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Committee:

Oregon's seven public universities, through OCOP, offer strong support for the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act - HB 3182 and HB 3183. The challenges many students face outside the classroom – such as food insecurity, housing instability, and the high costs of textbooks – profoundly impact their ability to succeed within the classroom. This legislation significantly enhances the institutions' ability to meet students' basic needs, improving their academic success and overall well-being.

Benefits Navigators

In 2021, the legislature passed the Benefits Navigators bill. Since its passage, navigators have served tens of thousands of students across all public universities. The navigators play an essential role in guiding students through the complex landscape of resources and services available to them. These professionals offer personalized support to help students access food, housing, healthcare, and financial aid. By addressing these fundamental needs, basic needs navigators empower students to focus on their academic pursuits and personal growth and, ultimately, achieve their degree and join the workforce.

Low-Cost Student Housing

The availability of affordable housing is a critical factor in ensuring that students can pursue their education without the burden of excessive financial stress. The rising cost of housing in Oregon has made it increasingly difficult for students to find secure and affordable living arrangements. To address this issue, HB 3138 prioritizes the development of low-cost student housing options. By leveraging public-private partnerships, we can create innovative housing solutions that meet the unique needs of students.

Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open educational resources (OER) are vital in creating affordable access to high-quality educational materials. Unlike traditional textbooks, which can be prohibitively expensive, OERs are freely available and can be customized to better meet the needs of students and educators. By expanding the use of OER in Oregon, we can significantly reduce the financial burden on students and enhance the quality of education.

The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act expands three proven programs that not only address the immediate needs of students but also contribute to their long-term success and well-being.

We urge the members of the committee to prioritize these initiatives and assist in identifying the necessary resources to ensure their successful implementation. Together, we can create a brighter future for all students in our state.