

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

My name is Teresa Alonso Leon, and I am the former State Representative of House District 22 and former Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, I'm now a consultant and lobbyist for CAPACES Leadership Institute and the program lead for the Oregon Community Table on Postsecondary Education and Training also known as OCTPET, which is Oregon's first community-based statewide advocacy group on postsecondary education. I am speaking today in support of HB 3182 and HB 3183: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. As you will hear from the testimony following me, this part of the package and this bill in particular are about securing stronger support for Oregon's Statewide Textbook Affordability Program.

As a former state legislator, I met with many students, and they expressed many challenges that I thought had been resolved since I was in college. Then I learned that Oregon is three decades behind in fully funding our postsecondary education system.

To better understand the impact of Oregon not fully funding our higher education system, I thought it would be a great idea to form a task force and tour the state to hear directly from our students and institutions. With the help of key partners like the HECC, and the Oregon Student Association (OSA) we passed [HB 2590](#) in 2021 and in 2022, the Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE) was officially implemented with eight legislators representing the house and senate.

We participated in two-day site visits to nine community colleges and universities and had a few virtual site visits to correctional facilities and other educational institutions. Among a full agenda, we prioritized round table discussions with underrepresented students, who ranged from 16 to 60 years old.

What we learned was that Oregon's students in higher education are experiencing the same societal challenges that everyone else is experiencing but as students, they are experiencing Housing and Food insecurity higher than that of the general population, with BIPOC students experiencing hunger at a rate nearly double than that of white students. Other significant barriers we learned about were childcare deserts, the high cost of tuition and textbooks, and transportation. This is still what is on the minds of our students instead of studying and passing tests. HB 3182 & HB 3183 are critical policies meant to help our students address these issues so they can focus on being students.

It is important to note that while the issues our students face are not new, neither are any of the programs in HB 3182 and HB 3183. These two bills seek to secure funding to keep up with the exponential growth of student basic needs. For example, Benefits Navigators,

through [HB 2835](#), have served over 30,000 students in the past year, and yet, almost none of them have programmatic funding. Despite this program's [well-documented success](#), the funding for HB 2835 was included in the Governor's Recommended Budget as a proposed cut. We are now fighting to maintain the current service level for HB 2835 while attempting *for the third time* to expand funding to match the chronic needs of students.

On behalf of OCTPET's close to 100 statewide members, I hope that I can count on your support of HB 3182 and HB 3183: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. As a former member of this committee and someone who originally helped pass the student navigators policy, I urge you to pass these two bills and advocate for the same to happen in Ways and Means. Thank you