

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

For the record, my name is Jennifer Sacklin, and I work at Lane Community College (LCC). I am here in support of HB 3182, which provides basic needs support funding at Oregon colleges and universities. I am here in solidarity with my colleague Rebecca Ramos, LCC's Benefits Navigator, who you heard from in person, who works miracles to help students.

Before the Oregon Legislature passed the 2021 Benefits Navigator bill, I worked as an academic coach for LCC students who receive SNAP benefits and are aiming to improve their lives through education and training that lead toward family-wage jobs.

My coaching job primarily focused on students who were working towards getting their GEDs.

As a reminder, nationwide, people with high school diplomas or GEDs earn over \$9,000 per year *more* than people with less than a high school diploma, so it is *critical* that colleges support students who are working towards their GEDs.

Throughout 2020, I coached GED students who suddenly became homeless due to the pandemic. They were living in their cars and trying to attend classes on Zoom while sitting in the parking lot outside public libraries to use the wi-fi.

One of my students was living in a tent when the police swept her homeless encampment. She lost all of her possessions. She was desperate to get her GED so she could provide a living for her family, but it was almost impossible for her to succeed in her GED classes while experiencing homelessness.

I could not help her. I did not have the training or the network or the funding to connect her with housing. All I could do was offer sympathy on the phone as she cried from the ruins of her tent.

After the benefits navigators were funded, however, they have been able to help students just like her. Over a 1-year period, Oregon benefits navigators referred over 22,000 students to basic needs providers such as shelters for those fleeing domestic violence, job placement programs, local health clinics, food pantries, housing and more.

Benefits navigators are crucial. The nationwide Hope survey, released yesterday, shows that 59% of college students experience either food or housing insecurity, and yet 2/3 of the survey respondents were not aware of the resources that exist to help them. That's why it's essential that you continue to fund basic needs support and that we urge the governor to fund benefits navigators.

If Oregon wants to have a stable workforce of people earning family-wage jobs, Oregon needs to invest in higher education and in basic needs support navigation so students can learn about and connect to resources that help them finish college to get good jobs.

Thank you for your time, and I hope I can count on you for support of HB 3182.