

Testimony in support of HB3183

Submitted by: Candice Watkins, Dean of Library, Eastern Oregon University

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbrick, and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Candice Watkins, I'm the Dean of Library at Eastern Oregon University. I'm here to speak about the importance of Oregon's statewide textbook affordability program, Open Oregon Educational Resources, and its impact on students. I've now had the honor in my career of working at two different institutions in Oregon - Clatsop Community College and now Eastern Oregon University. Both institutions serve rural populations with high numbers of first generation college students. Throughout my career, I've witnessed the various financial barriers that our students face that often prevent them from achieving their goals. Many of these barriers revolve around student basic needs, like food, housing, and access to technology. A four month period at EOU in the Fall of 2024 illustrates this need clearly:

198 EOU students received food assistance and approximately 300 received assistance for various other needs, including housing, technology, and textbook vouchers.

This leads us to the very specific barrier of textbook affordability. Many times, our students must choose between paying the high cost of course materials or paying for basic needs. EOU is a small, rural institution with limited personnel and resources to support the work of textbook affordability. We rely on Open Oregon to support our faculty with training and stipends to continue this work. Thanks to Open Oregon and the work of EOU faculty and staff, EOU is making progress with textbook affordability. During the 21-23 biennium, EOU saved students a total of \$2.2 million in textbook savings. Open Oregon played an important role in this progress. Thank you for your time today and for your continued support of HB3182 and 3183.