



February 28, 2025

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

On behalf of Portland Community College, I ask that you please support HB 3182 and HB 3183, the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. This package supports Oregon's college and university students who face obstacles in accessing and persisting in education due to lack of access to basic needs supports. This bipartisan initiative invests \$22 million to remove financial barriers for students through basic needs programs, affordable housing, and free or low-cost textbooks.

In 2021, the Oregon State Legislature passed the Benefits Navigator Bill (HB 2835), mandating that each community college and public university hire a benefits navigator and providing funding for the position. Benefits Navigators are making a difference across our campuses. Statewide, Navigators served 15,787 students in 2024, a 43% increase over 2023. Still, in a 2023 Hope Center survey, 64% of survey respondents from PCC said they experienced food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness.

The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Package increases the effectiveness of Benefits Navigators by directing \$10 million in grant funding for additional personnel, programming, and infrastructure support for basic needs resources across public postsecondary organizations statewide. These funds will be used to strengthen basic needs programming, allowing Benefits Navigators to address food and housing insecurity in a way that best fits the needs of the students they serve.

The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Package also allocates \$6.5 million to non-profit organizations dedicated to providing postsecondary students with low-cost housing. This will support programs like College Housing Northwest's Affordable Rents for College Students (ARCS) program, which has served over 160 students with subsidized rent, the majority of which are BIPOC, first-generation, or low-income students. The impact of programs like ARCS is substantial - on average, ARCS students have significantly less housing debt, earn \$1 million more throughout their lifetimes, and have contributed an additional \$381,000 in taxes.

Lastly, the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Package will establish a grant program to provide \$4,500,000 in funding for Open Oregon Educational Resources (OOER) for the 2025-27 biennium. Since 2015, grants to OOER have provided students with over \$24 million in savings through low and no-cost coursework. This represents \$12 in student savings with every program dollar spent, creating a proven track record of leveraging state resources to create tangible community impact.

By addressing the critical barriers of food insecurity, housing instability, and educational costs, the Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act will not only improve academic success outcomes but also enhance the lives of thousands of students, particularly those from communities vulnerable to financial hardship and limited infrastructure. As such, I respectfully urge your support for HB 3182 and HB 3183 to represent a necessary investment in the future of our students and the strength of our higher education system.

Thank you,



Vicky López Sánchez
Interim Vice President of Student Affairs