

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

My name is Rebecca Ramos, and I am a Benefits Navigator at Lane Community College. I am here today to speak in support of HB 3182.

As a Benefits Navigator in Lane County I see an influx of parenting students, youth, and older adults struggling to make ends meet because of the lack of livable wage jobs, lack of affordable housing or rent control policies, and lack of affordable educational pathways. Several of the students I work with are living in their cars or camping in the woods while going to school. In most cases they are also working a minimum wage job which is not sufficient to pay for multiple rental application fees and make 3x the rent to be approved. Let me remind you that Oregon is #1 in youth and family homelessness and you have an opportunity to change this. With the support of our benefit navigator team we have been able to cultivate relationships with community partners such as Lane County HHS, OED, and local organizations to try and leverage as many resources to address students' basic needs while reducing the financial burden of attending higher education

An example of this would be that LCC's basic needs team can now provide direct referrals to Lane County rental assistance and diversion programs especially for those facing evictions who need to be connected to legal services. Another example of this is a student who came into the center on their last vial of insulin. They were going to have to wait 3-4 weeks to get another month's supply. Our team contacted our community partner who scheduled an intake for the following day and our student was able to receive 6 months worth of insulin at no cost. If our students are hungry or worried about life sustaining medication, they will not achieve academic success and we are failing to provide holistic student support.

This bill will allow us to continue investing in the basic needs of our students and families to ensure they have the support needed to thrive. Oregon can pave the way for all working class families to achieve economic mobility which ultimately leads to a stronger and skilled workforce. Lane County Economic Data reflects that in 2022, nearly 1/4 of all jobs in Oregon were held by workers 55+ years old which continues to show that our states workforce is aging. Health care (both private and public) stands out for the size of its aging workforce, with nearly 70,000 workers ages 55 and over. Other industries with large numbers of workers nearing retirement age include manufacturing (49,000 workers), retail trade (48,000), and private and public educational services (38,000). This highlights the importance of investing in our future workforce and state economy.

The recently released Hope Center Basic Needs survey highlights key findings:

- **3 in 5 of students experience basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing**
- **41% experience food insecurity**
- **67% of parenting students experience housing insecurity**
- **72% of former foster youth experience housing insecurity**
- **62% of students with disabilities experience basic needs insecurity related to food and/or housing – 13 percentage points higher than students without disabilities**

Sources:

The Hope Center 2023-2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report. (February 26, 2025). The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Source: Oregon Employment Department, U.S. Census Bureau ACS table S2301