

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Katya Karlapati, and I am a student at Oregon State University, where I serve 20,000 people in my role as a Senator for the Associated Students of Oregon State University.

As a student leader, I hear firsthand from my peers at OSU about the financial barriers they face and how 1 in 4 students are food insecure. This includes rising tuition, unaffordable housing, food insecurity, and the burden of expensive textbooks. These challenges not only make it harder for students to complete their degrees but also force many to choose between their education and meeting basic needs.

I want to thank the co-chairs for their student support, and including funding for navigator positions, which have connected thousands of students with essential resources. However, the reality is that Oregon still lags behind other states in higher education funding, and without further investment, students will bear the consequences. The proposed budget is about \$30 million below the current service level needed for the Public University Support Fund. Without this additional funding, universities could be forced to raise tuition and cut vital student services.

To truly support students, I urge you to:

Fully fund the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) at \$1.275 billion to prevent tuition hikes and cuts to critical services.

Invest \$450 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) to expand financial aid for low- and middle-income students.

Provide \$920 million for the Community College Support Fund to ensure equitable access to higher education.

And

Pass House Bills 3182 and 3183, allocating \$22 million for food assistance, affordable housing, and textbook affordability programs—proven initiatives that help students persist and graduate.

Oregon's students are the future of our workforce and economy. By investing in higher education now, we ensure that every student—regardless of background—has the opportunity to succeed. I urge you to close the funding gap and make the necessary investments to keep college affordable and accessible for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.