

TO: Chair Frederick, Vice-Chair Weber and Members of the Committee

FROM: Brent Wilder, President
Oregon Alliance for Independent Colleges and Universities

DATE: March 26, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 231

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (The Alliance), which represents Oregon's independent, nonprofit higher education sector.

I respectfully request your support for SB 231, which appropriates \$1,526,167 to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to the Oregon Campus Resilience Consortium. This consortium operates through the Institute for Resilience, Organizations, Communities, and Environments at the University of Oregon. As a committed consortium partner, The Alliance believes that in times of limited financial and human resources, collaboration is essential to strengthen Oregon's post-secondary institutions, advance organizational resources, and build capacity statewide.

Oregon's colleges and universities face a significant risk from various disasters and crises. We have experienced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, meningitis outbreaks, severe ice and snowstorms, wildfires and smoke, and the tragic shooting at Umpqua Community College. Our higher education institutions are key drivers of economic development at the local, state, and national levels. The ripple effect of post-secondary education benefits the public and enhances the well-being of all Oregonians.

The Oregon Campus Disaster Resilience Consortium is designed to enhance emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for all post-secondary institutions in Oregon. This initiative builds upon the national Disaster Resilient Universities (DRU) Network, which the University of Oregon has coordinated since 2005. The DRU Network provides a strong foundation for Oregon's institutions to connect, share resources, and align efforts with national resources.

This Consortium is essential for providing disaster preparedness, response, and recovery resources that all colleges and universities in Oregon need. Despite its critical importance, it often goes underfunded when resources are tight. Securing funding for this initiative will greatly enhance institutional preparedness, safety, and resilience across Oregon's higher education system.

The need for such a statewide effort is not only important, but urgent. Recommendations from various state and federal reports, as well as assessments from the National Center for Campus Public Safety and the DRU's nationwide evaluations of higher education emergency management programs in 2016, 2022, and 2024, emphasize the necessity of this initiative. Additionally, the findings of the 2016 Oregon Campus Public Safety Workgroup, appointed by Governor Kate Brown, highlight the importance of proactive measures to address future challenges.

I urge you to prioritize this critical funding request to ensure the resilience of Oregon's higher education institutions. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information or clarification. Thank you for your time and consideration.