

Submitter: Josie Justen

On Behalf Of: The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Committee: House Committee of Higher Education

Re: Testimony in support of House Bill SB 5525

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chair Ruis, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josie Justen. I am a proud member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and am currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Natural Resources through Oregon State University, with the goal of eventually earning a master's degree. I am writing on behalf of myself and all the tribal students whose lives have been transformed by the Oregon Tribal Student Grant.

The Oregon Tribal Student Grant has given me the opportunity to return to college after six years away. Over the past year, I have been working full-time while also attending school full-time, all in an effort to create positive change for myself and the future of my tribe. My husband, who is also a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, has made the decision to continue his education as well—all because of the opportunities this grant has made possible.

In my current role in Social Services for our tribe, I've witnessed firsthand how this grant has empowered many tribal members to take the step toward higher education—something many might not have considered without this critical support. Community members are now pursuing associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees because of what the Oregon Tribal Student Grant is making possible. This grant has provided vital funding to a community in need of opportunity, and as a result, those who have benefited are becoming agents of change themselves.

It has sparked a flame for learning in my community—a flame that, without continued support, risks being extinguished.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will support **SB 5525** to ensure that tribal students across Oregon can continue their education and carry this momentum forward.

Finally, I want to extend my gratitude to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and all of the incredible individuals who have helped make this life-changing grant a reality. It is a powerful investment in the future of tribal people across the state.

Sincerely,

Josie Justen

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