

Submitter: Tiffany Marx
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

As a third-year student at Western Oregon University, returning to college as an older student with the goal of becoming a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner serving rural Oregon, I've experienced firsthand how essential financial support is to student success. Pursuing higher education later in life comes with unique challenges, balancing academics with work, family, and life responsibilities. The Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), along with financial aid from my university, has been a lifeline, allowing me to stay enrolled and focused on my long-term goals instead of being overwhelmed by financial stress.

The Oregon Opportunity Grant is more than just a scholarship; it's a bridge to a better future, not only for me, but for the rural Oregonians I plan to serve. Mental health care is critically under-resourced in many parts of the state, and I am committed to using my education to bring compassionate, specialized care to those communities. Increasing funding for the OOG to \$450 million for the 2025 to 2027 biennium would ensure more students like me have the opportunity to complete their degrees and give back in meaningful ways.

Support programs like affordable housing initiatives, textbook assistance, and campus Benefits Navigators have also helped me meet my basic needs while managing the rigors of academic and clinical training. When Oregon invests in students, especially non-traditional and low-income students, it not only improves graduation rates but also builds a stronger, healthier, and more equitable future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Best,

Tiffany Marx
Western Oregon University
Student