

Submitter: Tiffany Marx  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

As a third-year student at Western Oregon University and an older adult returning to school, I've seen how critical public university funding is to students like me. I'm pursuing a degree with the goal of becoming a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner serving rural Oregon, where access to mental health care is limited and desperately needed. Achieving that goal depends not only on my dedication but also on the strength and stability of our public university system.

Western Oregon University is the oldest public university in the state. It was founded in 1856 and currently serves approximately 4,000 students. It has a proud tradition of offering accessible higher education, with 80% of students coming from Oregon and 80% receiving some form of financial aid. Half of WOU's students are the first in their families to attend college, and 41% identify as students of color, including 25% who identify as Hispanic or Latino. It is a place where students like me, nontraditional, local, and drive, can thrive.

State support through the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), which is funded by SB 5525, directly impacts my ability to continue my education. When universities are adequately funded, students have access to essential services like academic advising, libraries, faculty support, and campus resources that make success possible, especially for non-traditional students balancing school, work, and family. Without this support, the cost of education rises, services shrink, and students face greater obstacles to completing their degrees.

By investing \$1.275 billion in the PUSF through SB 5525 for the 2025 to 2027 biennium, Oregon can help ensure students like me not only stay on track to graduate but are also prepared to meet the state's growing need for skilled professionals. Supporting public universities is an investment in Oregon's future and in the future patients I will serve as a mental health provider.

Thank you,

Tiffany Marx  
Western Oregon University  
Student