

Submitter: Erin Elliott

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Co-Chairs Ruiz and Sollman, and members of the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education,

My name is Erin Elliott I am an adjunct faculty member at Portland State University as well as Pacific University, and I am here today to speak in support of the following:

The Public University Support Fund (PUSF)

The Community College Support Fund (CCSF)

The Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG)

HB 3357: Community College Part-Time Faculty Pay Parity

HB 3182 / HB 3183: Student Basic Needs Package

I am a first generation college student from a low income family who worked full time all through college to support myself in efforts towards obtaining my PhD. I also attended community college as a stepping stone as it was a necessary path for me to transfer into a larger state school and provided access to state schools that I would have not otherwise had. This was not an easy task and took much longer to complete than a “traditional” student’s trajectory. As a first generation college student, I understand the barriers to higher education that first gen students face, and they are in need of additional support to meet basic needs, while also being able to prioritize their education. Education is a human right that we should afford to all.

Currently, as a PhD and adjunct professor at PSU, I have seen my courses decline rapidly over the last few years and am now on food stamps for the first time in my adult life, as well as at risk of losing my home. Sadly, the challenges I face are not unique, and many adjunct faculty across Oregon face similar struggles due to low pay and job instability. This should not be the case, and we need to do better to support living wages for higher education faculty. Not only that, but my courses in civic leadership, public administration, and nonprofit management help students cultivate the civic sensibilities and habits of the heart necessary to be a responsible member of a democracy, and our communities suffer as a result of the major budget cuts affecting universities in Oregon.

I am asking you to please support college affordability to support students' basic needs, workforce investment programming, community college pay parity for part time faculty, and public university support funding. Continued cuts to higher education are detrimental to faculty, staff, students, Oregon’s workforce and economy, and in turn, our communities and democracy at large.

Thank you for your time and I hope I can count on you to support the above mentioned budget requests.

Sincerely,

Erin Elliott, MPA, PhD