



ASUO CHIEF OF STAFF

VERBAL TESTIMONY

Oregon Joint Ways and Means Committee

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Mount Hood Community College

Co-Chair Lieber, Co-Chair Sanchez, Members of the Committee—thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. My name is Ravi Cullop, and I am a student at the University of Oregon. I am from Southwest Portland, in Senator Lieber’s district.

For two years, I worked at the Student Advocacy Program at U of O, and among other things, that involved helping students utilize all the resources they get when they find themselves struggling.

One day, a student came into our office in tears with her mom on speaker phone in her hand. She explained that she was being forced to drop out because she could not afford to stay at U of O—as well as feeling like she, as a black person, did not belong in Eugene.

She was worried about dropping out because she was living in the dorms, and didn’t want to get evicted if she were no longer paying tuition. In any case, she had no money to get back home once she no longer had a place to live in Eugene.

I know y’all are familiar with the statistics about Oregon’s higher education funding, and the increased financial burden students have faced in recent years, but I think it’s important not to lose sight of the real people this is affecting. These are folks who often aren’t in a position to advocate for things like HB 3182 and 3183, but they are still here, they are still taxpayers, and they still matter.

In that student’s case, our team at the Student Advocacy Program was able to work with our Benefits Navigator, Julia, to drop her down to the minimum number of credits not to get evicted from the dorms, put her on the maximum amount of aid they were allowed to give her, and were able to get her \$700 of emergency funds so she could get back home.

I am grateful to the Co-Chairs for including funding for these Benefits Navigators in their budget



framework, and it is equally important to consider bills like HB 3182 and 3183 which provide \$22 million for food assistance, housing support, and textbook affordability.

Without Julia, our Benefits Navigator, and these funds for support services, we would not have been able to help that student, and we will not be able to help students like her in the future. These need for basic needs resources, by the way, has grown 43% at U of O in the past year.

My priority as a student and lifelong Oregonian is not only making sure Oregon's workforce and economy continues to grow thanks to our universities, but making sure that students who can't afford to attend them don't become homeless.

Thank you for your time.