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Portland, OR
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Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in strong support of bold, sustained investment in Oregon's public higher education system.

Investing in higher education transforms lives and strengthens communities. To ensure all Oregonians have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of income, background, or zip code. This is especially relevant to the queer and trans community, whose members are more likely to experience poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness than their straight, cisgender peers. The Legislature must continue to make forward-thinking investments in our state's public colleges and universities.

More is needed to truly ensure equity and opportunity in higher education. I urge you to:

- Invest **\$450 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant** to expand financial aid for low- and moderate-income students,
- Invest **\$1.275 billion in the Public University Support Fund** to keep tuition manageable and preserve academic quality,
- Allocate **\$22 million for the Basic Needs Package (House Bills 3182 and 3183)** to provide essential support like food and housing assistance.

These are not just budget line items—they are lifelines. They mean more first-generation college students completing their degrees, more workers prepared for Oregon's evolving economy, and more families who see higher education as a path forward. Likewise, they ensure a more equitable, diverse workforce that truly reflects the state and its values.

Oregon's public colleges and universities are economic engines, workforce pipelines, and places of hope. Let's make sure they are fully supported in this budget cycle so that every Oregonian has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to students and families across the state.

Sincerely,
Mikki Gillette