



April 21, 2025

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Education

Re: Senate Bill 5525 – Education Funding, Support

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Ruiz, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is William Miller. I'm Blackfeet and Cherokee and I serve as the Executive Director of the NAYA Action Fund, a Native-led organization that builds political power and advances advocacy for Native communities in Oregon and Washington. I write today to urge your full support of SB 5525 and to emphasize why this budget is a commitment to Oregon's future.

For Native students and families, higher education is a path toward healing, mobility, and long-term stability. It's the bridge between intergenerational struggle and intergenerational strength. But that path remains out of reach for too many – especially first-generation, low-income, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students – because we haven't made the investments needed to clear the way.

SB 5525 matters. The \$1.275 billion in the Public University Support Fund ensures our universities can keep tuition within reach, retain faculty, and provide the support services students need to succeed. If we underfund this, we don't just risk cutting programs – we risk cutting off futures.

The \$450 million Oregon Opportunity Grant gives low-income and BIPOC students the chance to pursue their education without being consumed in debt. It's often the deciding factor between enrolling or not, finishing or dropping out. Funding it is one of the clearest ways to keep the promise of equity.

We also can't ignore the basic needs crisis on our campuses. Housing instability, food insecurity, and impossible financial choices are not abstract – they are daily realities for too many. The Basic Needs Package is essential. No student can succeed if they're unhoused or hungry, no matter how driven they are.

If we believe every Oregonian deserves a fair shot at higher education, we must fund these systems like our future depends on them – because it does.

Thank you for your leadership, and for standing with the students who are ready to rise – if we invest in their climb.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William Miller", is written over a white rectangular background.

William Miller  
Executive Director