

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

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee. My name is Britta Lawrence, and I am the Executive Director of Advancement and Foundation at Tillamook Bay Community College in Tillamook. I am here today to voice my strong support for Oregon's community colleges and to urge you to fully fund the HB5525 Community College Support Fund request at \$920 million.

Community college changes lives. My mom went to community college after being a stay-at-home parent for 15 years. Her ability to leverage the flexible community college education and support systems, while raising three children and maintaining a household allowed her to earn a Registered Nurse degree. This education provided a family living wage to support five people after my dad was laid off. This was a Career Technical Education pathway that truly was life changing for her and our family. This story is not unique to us, but many others have experienced the transformative impact of community college.

These colleges are the heart of our communities. They provide affordable education, workforce training, and opportunities for students of all ages and backgrounds to build better futures.

Beyond individual success stories, community colleges are also a key driver of our local economy. Employers depend on community college graduates to fill critical jobs in industries like healthcare, manufacturing, public safety, and technology particularly impactful in rural communities. Previously one hundred percent of medical assisting students were hired by local healthcare providers in Tillamook. Tillamook Bay Community College was the only institution that did not have a nursing program in the state – our ability to provide this education to our county directly supports our community and filled the request of our local healthcare providers; Adventist Health Tillamook and Nehalem Bay health center.

But without adequate state support, community colleges face tough choices—raising tuition, cutting programs, or reducing student services. That makes it harder for students to access the education they need by increasing barriers and it weakens the workforce pipeline that businesses rely on. Now more than ever students need access to support services. Tillamook Bay receives a record number of emergency fund requests with increasing dollar amounts. Maintaining services for our students and community is critical.

I've seen and experienced firsthand the transformative change that community

colleges have for individuals and families in our communities. They provide opportunities, hope, and a path to success for so many who might not otherwise have one. I believe community colleges are essential for opportunity and growth. Funding them means investing in education, the workforce, and a stronger future for all.

That's why I'm asking you to invest in them beyond the proposed budget of 858 million. Fully funding community colleges at \$920 million for the 2025-27 biennium isn't just an investment in schools—it's an investment in people, businesses, and the future of Oregon. That's because community colleges WORK for Oregon.

Thank you for your time and consideration in fully funding the Community College Support Fund.