

Submitter: Maria Leos

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 Maria Leos, and I am a Student Support Specialist at Tillamook Bay Community College. I completed my GED in June of 2024 and recently received my certification for Phlebotomy last term. 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 for the next biennium.

Tillamook Bay Community College changed my life. I became unemployed after 18 years of working at a factory, I hadn't been to school in 35 years and knowing my old job wasn't available, I needed additional training so I could get a new living wage job to support myself and my five children as a single parent. Because of all the technological advances that were established when I was working in the factory, I knew I needed to take some courses to learn new skills and help me be successful. I knew receiving an education at TBCC would help me find a job to support myself and family until I retire. I never would have been able to do this without support from TBCC.

Community colleges provide an affordable, accessible education that empowers individuals to build better lives for themselves and their families. For many students, including those who are first-generation college-goers, working parents, or returning adults, like me, these institutions are the only viable pathway to achieving a degree or learning skills for in-demand careers.

Without adequate state support, TBCC and other Oregon community colleges will face tough choices – raising tuition, cutting programs or reducing student services. This will make it harder for students to access education they need by increasing barriers, ultimately weakening the workforce pipeline that business rely on – particularly in rural areas like Tillamook. Now more than ever students need access to support services.

That's why I am 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.

Sincerely,
Maria Leos
Former student and TBCC Employee
Tillamook Bay Community College