

Submitter: Skylar Connolly

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee  
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Good morning everyone,

My name is Skylar Connolly, I am a graduate student in criminal justice at Western Oregon University. I am a first-generation student. I graduate this spring term with my master's degree. Higher education saved my life in a couple of ways. First, I came from poverty and homelessness. I never thought that I would be getting a professional degree. I went from wondering the streets to a stable life that I can be proud of. I owe all of that to higher education. Second, I am a recovered addict that has been clean for over a decade. I was told by career counselors that I would only be able to make it if I went to a trade school. However, that was not the path I wanted. I wanted an advanced degree that could get me out of living paycheck to paycheck. So, I pushed harder, have a 3.9 GPA and proved myself trustworthy by working for Western Oregon University while I get me degree. Third (the hardest), I have a felony from 16 years ago that still follows me. Western Oregon University gave me a chance, not just for my bachelor's degree but also for my professional degree and they employed me to help student through their financial journey at a university level. Higher education has given my wife and I a chance to rise out of poverty. My wife also took her upper division credits at Western and graduated from the OHSU satellite program here at Western. Higher education needs funding for students like me. Everyone deserves an opportunity in this country, at least that is what we are told as children. By not funding higher education Oregon will be taking away opportunities for students like me. Higher education helped rehabilitate me and it could for other too but if all the funding falls away then you are looking at a small population that can actually afford to go to college. This leaves non-traditional students like me in a bind, we cannot afford college out of pocket. Therefore, I am begging you to keep funding higher education.

P.S. I have a long memory and from someone who remembers a decade ago, I remember that this funding should have all been taken care of. The Oregon Government told the citizens of Oregon that if they passed the marijuana bill the tax revenue would take care of the schools in Oregon. We were lied to. Not only on the higher education but also on K-12. Gervious school district is barely keeping the doors open. Where did all the money go??? There are a ton of dispensaries, and they look busy... So, while you guys sit up in the capital, making 6 figures, the state of Oregon suffers educationally.