

Submitter: Tim Marker
On Behalf Of: Future Connect Program
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Thank you, Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz, and Members of the Committee. My name is Tim Marker, and I am a College Success Coach in the Future Connect program at PCC. I'm here today to respectfully ask for your support in funding Oregon's community colleges at \$920 million and \$450 million for Oregon Opportunity Grant for the 25-27 biennium.

Community colleges are the most affordable and accessible entry point to higher education and career training in Oregon. Every day at PCC, I see the powerful impact our institution has on students' lives. The students I work with are the first in their families to attend college, working to build a better future for themselves and their families. My testimony to you today would not be possible without investment in higher education. I was a first generation, low income student who grew up in rural poverty with limited economic opportunity. Even though I qualified for a Pell grant, it was a state funded program, like the Oregon Opportunity Grant, that made it possible for me to attend and complete college. I am living proof that investment in higher education can raise people out of poverty and equip them to follow their dreams and better their communities.

At PCC, we're seeing growing enrollment, particularly in high-demand career and technical programs that directly align with Oregon's workforce needs. But with that growth comes increased demand for essential support services - things like childcare, food assistance, academic advising, and access to mental health and housing resources. These essential supports are not extras. They are what make college possible for many of our students who are balancing school, work, and family responsibilities.

This investment doesn't just benefit our students, it strengthens Oregon's economy, supports local employers, and helps build vibrant, resilient communities across the state.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to higher ed in Oregon. I urge you to fully fund the Community College Support Fund.