

Submitter: Lisa Skari

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Solman and Ruiz, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for your smart investment in Oregon's community colleges, and highlight how that investment helps Oregonians, through access to higher education, and through increased state budgets.

Oregon's 17 community colleges are not just educational institutions. We are engines of economic mobility and community development. Each year, we serve over 200,000 Oregonians — training nurses, welders, teachers, engineers, and small business owners — and preparing them to meet the needs of Oregon's economy today and tomorrow.

Investing in community colleges delivers a strong return. Studies consistently show individuals who complete a community college degree earn significantly higher wages over their lifetime compared to those with only a high school diploma. These higher wages don't just benefit individuals; they circulate through local economies, boost spending, and generate higher state tax revenues.

In fact, the increased earnings from community college graduates return multiple dollars in tax revenues for every public dollar invested. This is an investment that more than pays for itself, helping fund schools, healthcare, infrastructure, and the services we all rely on.

Without full funding, colleges will be forced to raise tuition, cut critical programs, and reduce student support services. This makes it harder for Oregonians, particularly rural students, first-generation students, and working adults, to complete their education and contribute fully to our economy.

A \$920 million investment is not just about keeping the doors open. It's about fueling Oregon's growth, building a strong, inclusive workforce, and ensuring we don't leave talent and potential on the sidelines.

Oregon's community colleges work for Oregon. Please invest in Oregon's future and fully fund the Oregon Community College Support Fund in SB 5525.

Thank you.