

Hello Co-Chairs Ruiz and Sollman and members of the committee,

My name is Susan Caisse and I am adjunct faculty member at Clackamas Community College.

I'm here today to advocate for more funding for Community Colleges. Specifically, I'm asking for

- \$920 million to the Community College Support Fund to avoid cuts,
- an additional \$40 million for HB 2669, pay parity for part-time faculty,
- and \$150 million more for the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

While I've only been at CCC since 2016, I've worked in Higher Ed since 1997. I know that you have a lot of fear around the budget and the chaos in the federal government, but I've already lived and worked through one recession while in higher education.

We know that enrollment skyrockets as students upskill to be more competitive, work to get or finish credentials that can mean higher pay, or enroll to gain access to benefits and sources of support. My now retired dean routinely talked about the recession when she asked people if they remembered having students coming out of their ears but no classes to put them into because classes had been cut.

Even before the most recent threats of recession, in Clackamas County many jobs are going unfilled because there aren't trained employees to take those jobs. Community College are where that training happens.

This trio of bills are investments in students, in communities, and in colleges that support the workforce infrastructure and get people trained and skilled in the most urgently needed jobs, such as in healthcare, behavioral health, and manufacturing. This is why the community college support fund cannot see cuts. We need \$920 million in order to avoid cuts.

Decades ago, higher education shifted from being a majority of full-time faculty, to a majority of part-time faculty to take cost savings and balance budgets in the face of shrinking state support. What we've done is balance the budget on the back of part-time faculty who may or may not really be part time. At Clackamas community college, our faculty have no credit limits for teaching. Over the last few years, I've taught 18 credit hours about twice a year. I do that for less pay and fewer benefits than my full-time faculty colleagues. I don't have paid prep or planning time. I don't have family health coverage. I work more for less money than my colleagues. This situation has really become critical as more and more adjunct faculty are getting increasingly angry about the inequity built into the system. Without pay parity, administrators aren't going to fix this problem on their own. It is just unethical to pay instructors with the same degrees, to teach the same classes at a lower wage.

This causes many of my colleagues are working at multiple institutions to make ends meet. Some have other, non-teaching jobs and cannot make the transition into teaching higher education. I have several colleagues who teach K-12 during the day and college at night. Many adjuncts live paycheck to paycheck, and for them, getting a class cancelled can be catastrophic. Right now, Oregon colleges and universities are losing good faculty to Washington or other states with higher pay and a higher percentage of full time jobs. This bill has been languishing for a decade. This is your opportunity to prevent brain-drain and retain good teachers who care deeply about their students and about Oregon. I'm a third generation native Oregonian. I don't want to drive to Washington every day, but I'll do what I have to in order to better

support my family. I hope you join me in hoping that Oregon can become a place where faculty want to come and teach, not a place where faculty flee from because of low, unsustainable wages. This is why \$40 million dollars for pay parity(HB 2669) is essential.

Lastly, I'm advocating for additional funds for the Oregon Opportunity grant. We know that one student can bring an entire family out of poverty. This has never been more true. I was that student. I was the first one in my family to graduate from college. I struggled with multiple jobs and that affected my schoolwork. My family didn't have any idea what it took to be a college student and had difficulty empathizing and supporting me. Today however, I'm not the only college graduate in my family. Through my example, every child in the next generation is a college graduate. I'm very proud of this fact. The Oregon Opportunity grant helped make them college graduates. That's why increasing the Oregon Opportunity grant by \$150 million is imperative.

On a final note, one clear thing we have seen in the post-pandemic economy is real wage increases for the first time in 40-50 years. As part of that, we have seen how low and middle income communities spend the money they have to spur the economy. It should be clear how all of these bills contribute to higher incomes, and higher incomes translate into a better and more vibrant economy. Community college is about getting people skilled, and trained, and on the job. That increases the taxes and encourages home ownership. This is what we need to alleviate the effects of the recession here in Oregon. In the 21-22 school year, community college had an economic impact of more than 9 billion. Community college graduates contributed 8.6 billion*, mostly through higher taxes. You will not regret strengthening community colleges and supporting everyone associated with them, faculty, staff and students. This is an investment that you can make that will continue to provide dividends for years into the future.

Thank you.

Susan Caisse

*Statesman Journal Article by M. Powell August 29, 2023