



Dear Co-chairs Ruiz and Sollman and members of the committee,

SEIU 503 is proud to represent thousands of classified employees across the state who work at the seven public universities in Oregon. I am submitting testimony today in strong support of bold, sustained investment in Oregon's public higher education system.

At SEIU, we have a simple but powerful belief: **“Higher Education works because we do.”** Classified staff are the foundation of the university. Our members are the people who ensure that classrooms are clean, financial aid gets processed, students are supported, technology works, libraries stay open, and essential services reach those who need them.

SEIU 503 members are also in an interesting position because they share a single contract across all the universities, so we have a unique interest in ensuring that ALL the universities have the funding to continue to provide strong contracts for their employees. Universities are a major employer, especially for rural communities, and need to have adequate funding to provide a high-quality education for students. This means being able to afford quality staff who keep the institutions running every single day.

Investing in higher education transforms lives and strengthens communities. To ensure all Oregonians have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of income, background, or zip code. The Legislature must continue to make forward-thinking investments in our state's public colleges and universities.

More is needed to truly ensure equity and opportunity in higher education. I urge you to:

- Invest **\$450 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant** to expand financial aid for low- and moderate-income students,
- Invest **\$1.275 billion in the Public University Support Fund** to keep tuition manageable and preserve academic quality,
- Allocate **\$22 million for the Basic Needs Package (House Bills 3182 and 3183)** to provide essential support like food and housing assistance.

These are not just budget line items—they are lifelines. They mean more first-generation college students completing their degrees, more workers prepared for Oregon's evolving economy, and more families who see higher education as a path forward.



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Oregon's public universities are economic engines, workforce pipelines, and places of hope. We are asking you to invest in that hope. To invest in our students and the people who work every day to make our public higher education system a source of pride for Oregon.

Let's make sure they are fully supported in this budget cycle so that every Oregonian has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to students and workers across the state.

Sincerely,

Elsie Elling

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