

Submitter: Andi Graham
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

(Verbal testimony given on Monday, April 28, 2025)

Good afternoon, Co-Chair Sollman and Ruiz, members of the committee:

My name is Andrea (Andi) Graham, and I am the Accommodations Project Coordinator in the Center for Accessible Resources at Lane Community College. I have worked in higher education since 2003 as a coach, advisor, teacher, mentor, and advocate. In my current role, I work to ensure access for students with disabilities, support faculty in implementing accommodations, and advocate for access, equity, and inclusion on campus. I am here today to express support for the full funding request of Oregon's community colleges (SB 5525) and the establishment of the Students with Disabilities Success Workgroup (SB 979).

I have witnessed firsthand the growing number of students utilizing our services, along with an increase in the costs associated with providing essential access. Depending on the need, our costs for ASL Interpreters can double from one year to the next. Eight chapters of a textbook in braille may cost \$4,000 and a one-page braille formula sheet for an exam, \$180. An alternate chair can cost anywhere from \$150-500. And a text to speech program used on a computer for accommodated testing may cost \$2,300.

Adequate funding is essential—not just for Accessibility offices, but across entire campuses—to fulfill the mission of our colleges and align with institutional priorities. When we invest in staffing, materials, technology, and services, we directly impact student access, inclusion, retention, and ultimately, contributions to Oregon's workforce and economy. Without sufficient funding, we fail Oregonians and limit our collective future. This is something we have the power to change.

The State of Oregon has both a legal and moral responsibility to ensure equitable access to education for students with disabilities. Ongoing assessment and policy improvements at both institutional and state levels are vital to upholding this responsibility. The proposed workgroup offers a crucial opportunity to better understand and meet the needs of students with disabilities by identifying and addressing gaps, streamline practices across the state, and ensure consistency in how supports are provided. These improvements aren't just about compliance—they're about creating an environment where all students have the opportunity to succeed.

When students are supported effectively and equitably, they are more likely to persist, complete their education, and contribute meaningfully to our state's workforce. Supporting this workgroup and providing adequate funding to community colleges are needed investments in Oregon's future.

Thank you for your time today and your investment in students.