



April 30, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 5525 - Support

Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz, and members of the Committee,

Good afternoon. I am Charles Riley, professor of civil engineering at the Oregon Institute of Technology and Klamath Falls Representative of my union, Oregon Tech AAUP.

Investing in higher education transforms lives and strengthens communities. It is the launch pad to the middle class and the driver of our state's skilled professional workforce. I have proudly watched our Oregon Tech graduates grow into productive designers and managers of our state's infrastructure, living truly fulfilling lives that support all Oregonians.

To ensure ALL Oregonians have the opportunity to succeed, the Legislature must make bold investments in our colleges and universities.

I'd like to thank you for restoring \$5 million to fund the benefits navigator positions at all 17 community colleges and 7 public universities because higher ed can be confusing for those not acquainted with it.

I'm urging you to grow the Oregon Opportunity Grant funding from \$300 to \$450 million, which will expand financial aid for low- and moderate-income students.

I ask you that you provide \$1.275 billion for the Public University Support Fund and \$920 million for the Community College Support Fund. 30 years ago the state provided 60% of higher ed operating costs but only funds 30% now. These investments will keep tuition manageable and maintain academic quality for this community and so many others in Oregon.

Finally, we need \$22 million for the Basic Needs Package - House Bills 3182 and 3183 - which will provide essential support like housing and food assistance to help our students stay enrolled, focus on their studies, and complete their degrees.

I urge the Legislature to fully fund these critical programs to ensure all Oregonians can access and succeed in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Charles Riley
Professor of Civil Engineering, Oregon Institute of Technology
Klamath Falls Representative, Oregon Tech AAUP.