

Submitter: Andrew Struthers
On Behalf Of: Classified Workers at Oregon State University
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5525

Hello, Good Afternoon.

Co-chairs Sollman and Ruiz and members of the sub-committee committee, my name is Andrew Struthers and I am an IT Consultant at Oregon State University. I serve as the SEIU 503 union sub-local president at Oregon State University. I am here today representing the roughly 1600 classified workers at Oregon State University.

We are your custodians, cooks, office specialists, environmental and health specialists, medical aides, research analysts, maintenance staff, IT staff, veterinary technicians, and over 200 different types of jobs.

At Oregon State University, classified workers are in every corner of the state and beyond. We can be found in Corvallis, Bend, Newport, Portland, in every county in the state through the extension services and outside of the state including on research vessels. We are essential to the mission and operation of the University.

I want to share a key aspect and role that classified workers do and can go on notice. Even though our titles may not be professors or instructors; many of us interact with students daily, being mentors, working directly with them in their campus jobs, and helping them achieve their goals towards graduation. We are helping develop the next workforce for generations outside of the classroom.

To ensure that staff are able to continue to support students in their education investment. I am asking that this sub-committee to support the ask of \$1.275 billion dollars for the Public University Support Fund within SB5525.

The PUSF is the foundation of affordable and accessible public universities—without adequate funding, student costs increase, services decline, and workforce development stalls.

Funding the Public University Support Fund (PUSF) at \$1.275 billion will strengthen essential student services, alleviate the financial burden on students and families, and help to stabilize our universities while making Oregon's workforce and economy more competitive with the rest of the region.

The Public University Support Fund (PUSF) is the primary source of state operating

support for Oregon's seven public universities. It helps fund educational and operational expenses, such as faculty and staff salaries, classrooms and libraries, research core facilities, academic advising, information technology, facilities, admissions, human resources, and financial aid.

Decades of underfunding have shifted the cost of public higher education onto students and families: three decades ago, the state covered more than 60% of public university operating costs; today, it covers less than 30%. Now, Oregon's public universities are among the lowest-funded in the nation on a per-student basis, with average tuition rates that are the highest in the West. If this trend continues, fewer Oregon students will have access to the education and skills needed for the state's most in-demand jobs.

I would like to close out by sharing that classified workers at Oregon State University and all the public universities are essential to the mission and operations of their University. We work in many aspects of the Universities and in all parts of the State, including out of the State at times.

As we continue to work and commit to our students at our Universities. We ask that you continue to show all workers of higher education your commitment and support to us.