



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

May 1, 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,

I am a Senior Instructor of History at Oregon State University, and I am proud to serve as the President of AAUP Oregon. As a concerned educator and parent and on behalf of the more than 6,300 faculty represented by the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, I urge you to support better higher education funding in Oregon's budget for the next biennium. Specifically, we call on you to appropriate \$450 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant to expand financial aid, \$1.275 billion in the Public University Support Fund, and \$920 million in the Community College Support Fund to keep tuition affordable. Additionally, \$22 million for the Student Basic Needs Package - House Bills 3182 & 3183 - will provide essential housing and food assistance to help students stay enrolled and graduate.

For the last four decades, students, staff, and faculty at American public universities have been forced to endure the slow-erosion of state funding that supports their learning and working conditions. The cause of this decay is obvious: our state and nation has abandoned support for public higher education and shifted responsibility for funding these institutions on the people least prepared to bear that burden: our students and their families. Here in Oregon, we have been particularly miserly with our state's support for higher education. We have the dishonor of being 45th in the nation when it comes to investing in higher education for the next generation of working Oregonians. This has led to skyrocketing student debt, guttering salaries of higher ed staff and faculty, and an acute post-pandemic staffing struggle that has left students with less support and fewer resources to succeed. With this lack of support, students are choosing not to enroll because they are realizing they simply cannot afford to come, while faculty and staff are leaving the institution because they simply cannot afford to stay.

The state of Oregon must do better for our students, staff, and faculty. An investment of \$1.275 billion for the PUSE, \$920 million for the CCSF, and \$450 million for the OOG can slow the damage done to our university and community college system by years of legislative neglect. Furthermore, Oregon's students must not be allowed to set aside their educational goals due to housing and food insecurity, so I call on you to invest \$22 million into the Student Basic

Needs Package (HB 3182 and 3183). Investing these funds in the next biennium will pay dividends as a more affordable college education will help the next generation of Oregonians achieve their dreams and contribute to our state's economy and culture.

Thank you for your dedication to Oregon's university and community college students, staff, and faculty.

Steve Shay
President, AAUP Oregon