



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 II of Economics at the University of Oregon. Teaching is a passion for me. Since arriving at UO in 2012, I have taught over 14,000 students, including multiple current and former legislative staff members at the State Capitol in Salem over the last decade.

I am also the very proud parent of a current UO student, currently finishing her third year. During the last three years, I have served as the President of our faculty union: United Academics of the University of Oregon. After 14 months of bargaining, mediation, impasse, and beyond, we came within hours of going on strike at the beginning of this term, pushing against years of underinvestment by our institution and pay that hasn't kept pace with inflation—much less with the pay of comparators.

Our public colleges and universities are essential in helping our state be an attractive place to live, to learn, and to build businesses, careers, families, and community.

For the sake of undergraduate education in the state, for the sake of our graduate programs and students, for the sake of maintaining the economic engines that our colleges and universities are, and for the sake of the valued amenities they provide, it is essential that the state redouble its commitment and financial support for higher education now and over the years to come.

As a passionate educator, as a parent, and on behalf of the membership of my union, I urge you to support increased higher education funding in Oregon's budget for the next biennium by investing at least \$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 (in House Bills 3182 and 3183) will provide essential housing and food assistance to help students stay enrolled and graduate.

Oregon's public universities and community colleges are severely underfunded in both absolute and relative terms. We are 44th in the nation for state investment in public universities. As of 2023, every state that borders ours invests more in their community college and public university students than Oregon does. The lack of public funding for higher education diminishes us collectively as a state, limiting the potential of Oregon's students, our academic programs, and our state's economy.

Without sufficient financial support from the state, the administrations of Oregon's public universities will once again attempt to balance their budgets on the backs of students and employees by raising tuition, slashing services, suppressing wages, increasing course loads, increasing class sizes, and reducing course

offerings. It will become even more difficult for students to graduate on time and more difficult for students to graduate without significant debt.

These trends can and must be reversed, but we can only do so if we collectively choose to do better for Oregon's students, faculty, and staff.

An appropriation of at least \$1.275 billion for the PUSF, \$920 million for the CCSF, and \$450 million for the OOG, and \$22 million for the Student Basic Needs Package in the next biennium will demonstrate a commitment to making higher education more accessible for the next generation of working Oregonians.

Thank you for your service to Oregon and for your commitment to its future—our collective future.

Mike Urbancic
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