

**Date:** April 29th, 2025

**To:** Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education

**From:** American Federation of Teachers – Oregon

**Re:** Increase Funding for the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG)

Co-Chairs Ruiz and Sollman, and members of the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Education,

AFT-Oregon is a federation of 27 local unions representing 18,000 education workers across early learning, K-12 classified, community colleges, and public universities. Today, our labor federation is writing to express our enthusiastic support of increasing funding by an additional \$150 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG), the state's largest need-based financial aid program.

The Opportunity Grant is the state's most important financial aid program for low-income students. It's what makes college possible for tens of thousands of Oregonians every year. And yet, as the cost of tuition, housing, and food continues to rise, current funding simply doesn't go far enough. Our members see it every day: students working two or three jobs, skipping meals, or dropping out altogether – not because they can't handle college, but because they can't afford it.

A \$150 million increase would allow the Oregon Opportunity Grant to reach more students, provide more meaningful aid, and keep pace with the real costs students face. At that level, the maximum award would cover nearly all of community college tuition and a significant portion of public university tuition – relief that could be the difference between staying enrolled and walking away.

Beyond its impact on students, well-funded financial aid programs like the OOG are essential to the stability of Oregon's higher education system. When students can afford to stay in school, faculty and staff jobs are more secure, and institutions can continue offering strong academic programs and support services. The OOG also plays a critical role in advancing equity. It disproportionately supports students from historically underserved backgrounds – women, students of color, rural students, first-generation college students, etc. These are the students who have been told that education is the key to opportunity. We need to ensure that promise is real.

Oregon can't afford to leave students behind. If we want a skilled, diverse, and resilient workforce, we need to make sure higher education is accessible to all – not just the wealthy. That starts with an additional investment of \$150 million in the Oregon Opportunity Grant.

**Signed,**

**AFT-Oregon**

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