



February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee,

My name is Lee Phillips and I am the Basic Needs Navigator at Portland State University. I am writing in support of HB 3182: The Student Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act, which will make essential critical investments in student basic needs initiatives, affordable student housing, and textbook affordability. I have seen directly the impact on students who are struggling with basic needs concerns, and that is why today I am asking for your support of this bill.

Data shows that over 50% of PSU students experience food and housing insecurity and 19% experience homelessness. 85% of the students who use the Basic Needs Hub identify as BIPOC and many are first generation, veterans, international students, or from rural areas in Oregon. They experience multiple barriers to retention and graduation because of housing instability, food insecurity, and financial concerns. Their financial aid packages do not cover these concerns. These issues greatly impact the student's ability to stay enrolled, focus on their academics, and graduate to transition into the workforce and give back to their communities.

Having a benefits navigator at each public higher education institution has been a proven strategy to address the basic needs insecurity that is disproportionately impacting these students.

Through HB 2835, PSU was able to open the Basic Needs Hub for students on February 15, 2022. We have supported over 5000 students since our opening and we are a visible, vibrant critical part of campus. We connect students to campus, cultural or community resources. We assist students experiencing homelessness to find shelters or affordable housing like the ARCS program through College Housing NW.

We develop community partnerships like the Oregon Energy fund where between 2023-2025 we have supported over 110 students with electric bill payments up to \$400 each. We offer SNAP and Oregon Health Plan

assistance, a food pantry, meal vouchers, gas cards, hop passes, and a place to rest and access resource support between classes. Emergency Funds are available for sudden unexpected concerns like car breakdowns, emergency room bills, rent, utility bills, laptop, childcare, job layoffs and more.

Without this bill passing to continue the support students need, we will certainly see an increase in basic needs concerns which will affect their mental health, academics, and workforce contribution. We also will not have the funds to continue the basic need services at PSU or my position.

I have seen in these three years as a navigator that accessing basic need resources is critical in students focusing on their studies, and developing plans for their jobs, and their future careers when they graduate. We have been able to create a sense of belonging for the students, and a one stop shop to address their basic need stressors that are affecting their ability to thrive on campus and in their communities.

A first generation, veteran, BIPOC student from eastern Oregon wrote:

*I do not know what I would have done without the Basic Needs Hub. When I came to PSU, I knew no one and the hub was one of the first places I visited. I was struggling, had not eaten in days, and was feeling hopeless and desperate. I was able to get a meal voucher to eat right away, apply for SNAP for food, a place to live with affordable rent, help with my electric bill, and an emergency fund scholarship when my grandmother passed away to attend her funeral. I also was hooked up with other resources in the community. I am so grateful, and really feel that I am graduating and hopeful about my future because of this continuous support.*

Thank you and I count on your support of HB 3182: an essential contribution to a better Oregon and our students.

Sincerely,



Lee Ann Phillips  
Basic Needs Navigator  
Portland State University

