



Written Testimony Before the Oregon House Committee  
In Support of House Bills 3182 and 3183: Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act

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Submitted by:  
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Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Hanbrick, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong support of House Bills 3182 and 3183, collectively known as the Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act. As an Associate Professor of ESOL and Bilingual Education and Coordinator of the Flexible Licensure Educator Pathways (FLEX) Program at Western Oregon University, I bring firsthand experience of the critical challenges facing our aspiring educators.

#### STATEMENT OF NEED

Oregon faces a pressing educator diversity crisis. Currently, only 11.4 percent of Oregon educators identify as teachers of color, with this percentage declining as educators progress in their careers—highlighting a significant retention challenge in our public schools. Despite these statistics, we continue to see strong interest from ethnoracially and linguistically diverse teacher candidates who choose to pursue their education through in-state providers.

In my six years at Western Oregon University, I have observed a fundamental shift in our teacher candidate demographics. Students in my programs are predominantly post-traditional learners—typically 25 years or older, transitioning from other careers, living off-campus, maintaining employment, and often supporting dependents. These students face unprecedented challenges in meeting their basic needs while pursuing their education.

#### IMPACT ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The FLEX program, which I coordinate, provides flexible access to educator licensure pathways for currently employed persons in Oregon's K-12 schools. Our program data shows that a large percentage of students identify as ethnoracially and linguistically diverse and first-generation college graduates. These individuals represent a crucial pipeline for diversifying Oregon's education workforce, yet they face significant barriers to completion that these proposed bills address.



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### EVIDENCE OF CRISIS

The crisis facing post-secondary education students, particularly aspiring educators, demands immediate attention—even without requiring personal narratives of hardship to compel action. However, to fully convey the urgency of this situation, I will share a representative case from the FLEX teacher preparation program.

Two years ago, an exceptional Latina teacher candidate in our dual language bilingual program was forced to withdraw from her studies despite completing 150 credits. Although she maintained full-time employment as a bilingual instructional assistant, she was not earning a livable wage and although she had accessed all available financial aid, scholarships, and emergency funding, she and her dependents ultimately faced eviction and experienced houselessness. The inadequate support for basic needs forced her to leave the program to seek additional employment resulting in a loss that impacts not only her future but the entire Oregon education system.

In my role working with candidates through both the ESOL endorsement process and the FLEX program, I have observed that this experience is not isolated. Many students regularly report food and housing insecurity while attempting to navigate licensure requirements and complete their degrees. They consistently express that even modest support to meet their basic needs would significantly improve their ability to complete their teaching credentials in a sustainable manner.

### SOLUTION AND REQUEST

House Bills 3182 and 3183 represent a crucial investment in Oregon's future education workforce by prioritizing support for students basic needs to be addressed while they are working to complete their post-secondary education. Research demonstrates that college affordability and attention to their basic needs being met directly correlates with: students improved mental health outcomes; an increase student retention and completion rates; enhanced economic mobility for Oregon families; and strengthened K-12 education workforce pipeline in the state. This is specifically and disproportionately impacts future educators of color.

### CONCLUSION

The Basic Needs and Workforce Stabilization Act represents an essential step toward addressing these systemic barriers. I respectfully urge the committee to support House Bills 3182 and 3183. This legislation is not merely about student support—it is an investment in Oregon's educational future and economic stability.

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Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. I am available to provide additional information or answer any questions the committee may have.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KLPratt".

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