

To Whom It May Concern,

I had no idea when I offered to write this if it would be of any use. But if I can express even a fraction of my gratitude for my Benefit Navigator, then it's worth every word. Because she, along with the support systems behind her, is the reason I'm sitting here today, writing this letter as a college graduate and a Portland State University student, rather than looking back on another failed attempt at pulling myself up.

There are only so many chances you get in life. And education? It's expensive, time-consuming, and honestly, life doesn't care if you're ready for it or not. I wasn't ready. I was surviving... barely.

If someone had asked me five years ago, "Do you see yourself with a college degree?" I would have laughed. Because back then, I was freezing in a tent outside Stayton, OR, working whatever seasonal jobs I could find (pulling green chain at a lumber mill, processing corn at a cannery). Just trying to stay invisible, stay alive.

I had no idea that a **Trade Act grant** from a job I'd long since left would change everything. When I got the call that I could go to college, I had two weeks to enroll before the opportunity disappeared. Two weeks to turn my entire life upside down and take a chance that felt completely out of reach.

And I did it. But what they **don't tell you** is that tuition isn't the only cost of going to college.

- **Where was I supposed to live?**
- **How was I going to eat?**
- **How could I afford gas just to get to class?**

That's where my Benefit Navigator changed the game. She made sure I had access to food, transportation, emergency aid, resources I didn't even know existed. And when my Jeep, my home, started falling apart? When I faced every setback that should have knocked me down for good? She made sure I didn't have to choose between surviving and succeeding.

Because of her, because of the basic needs support that HB 3182 and HB 3183 will fund. I wasn't just able to stay in school. I excelled.

- **I lived in my Jeep for nearly two years.**
- **I taught myself how to fix guitars when mine broke.**
- **I rebuilt my Jeep's engine with my own hands.**
- **I graduated with a 3.9 GPA and full honors.**

- I was nominated for student commencement speaker at Clackamas Community College.
- And now? I'm studying Computer Science at Portland State University, looking at a six-figure career in AI.

None of this would have been possible without my Benefit Navigator.

So, this letter isn't just about her—it's about what her position represents. It's about what happens when students don't have to fight battles alone.

HB 3182 and HB 3183 aren't just policies. They are the difference between a student making it or not.

- ✓ **\$10 million for Benefit Navigators and basic needs support:** because no one should have to choose between class and their next meal.
- ✓ **\$6.5 million for affordable student housing:** because no one should have to live in a car just to get an education.
- ✓ **\$5.2 million for textbook affordability initiatives:** because knowledge shouldn't be locked behind a paywall.

I know what it's like to stand at the edge of an opportunity and feel like it's just out of reach. I also know what happens when the right support system is in place to bridge that gap.

That's why I urge you to vote YES on HB 3182 and HB 3183.

Because students like me? We **can** succeed—we just need the chance.

Sincerely,

William Morehead

Student, Portland State University

P.S. Learning how to weld informed the artist in me





