

Submitter: Melanie Landon-Hays
On Behalf Of: Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3182

Hello!

I am writing to provide my support for HB 3182 which directs the HECC to administer a grant program to fund basic needs programming. Because The State Legislature has previously passed other measures specific to student support accessing basic needs resources such as:

- Requiring public universities and community colleges to hire a benefits navigator who can assist students in accessing resources
- Appropriating funds to continue to support these institutions with funding the benefits navigator roles and basic needs programming

It is essential that funding is provided to support Universities to meet these requirements. Our regional universities are already struggling financially, and student support is essential to our success, given that many of our students are first generation, non-traditional and / or working while they are students. Many of their basic needs are in danger of not being met. At my University---WOU---the Basic Needs Coordinator in Abby's House serves as the benefits navigator. She works tirelessly with students to assist them with accessing resources and information to meet their basic needs. Some of the specific assistance she provides include:

- Helping students understand the SNAP and OHP application processes
- Providing grocery and gas gift cards to students
- Referring students to local resources such as the Polk County Resource Center
- Overseeing the WOU Food Pantry and Stitch Closet
- Hosting workshops and outreach events with topics such as SNAP, food insecurity, outdoor markets, financial literacy, and more

Providing grant funding to enhance the work that is already required would benefit WOU and its students, ensuring their success in their studies and that their basic needs are met. I wholeheartedly support this bill and encourage you to, as well.

Thank you, Melanie Landon-Hays
Faculty member at Western Oregon University
President if WOUFT, the faculty union at WOU