

Oregon Student Association



Chair Doherty, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Helt, Members of the Committee,

My name is Alona Arneson and I am a transfer student at the University of Oregon, studying as a major in Political Science, with a double minor in Nonprofit Administration and Spanish. I actively urge this committee to vote yes on bill HB 2214, as it is pertinent to the preservation of higher education.

The primary purpose for my testimony today is due to the adverse circumstances that my family and I have faced, leading me to be the first member of my family to attend higher education. The fact that I am here today, speaking to all of you, is an opportunity that has been manifested through hard work, countless hours of scholarship applications and substantial loans. That being said, the cycle of poverty that has consumed my family still consumes me today.

I take out over \$8,000 dollars a year---just to simply maintain my position as a student at the University of Oregon. Though this may seem miniscule in comparison to the loan burden of others, I suffer long term financial consequences so my family can sustain short term survival. I have no familial support. I have no money to put towards these loans. I will likely walk out of this collegiate experience with over \$40,000 in loans, with no ability to pay them back.

My family of six has gone two weeks without toilet paper, on multiple accounts. We no longer have the “luxury” of garbage disposal services because that is how much weight \$100 has to us. They are unable to offer any contribution to my educational pursuits and are often shamefully forced to ask me for financial assistance to cover basic living costs. With that context in mind: fall term of this year I was forced to take out an emergency loan for \$300 worth of

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textbooks, just so I could eat. I have had to pass on the purchase of supplementary class materials, just so I could pay my rent. I consistently have to carve time out of both my work and school schedule to access pantry services off campus. I work 25 hours a week, on top of a full-time school schedule, on top of extracurricular activities, on top of debilitating mental health issues. I do not have the time or financial stability to miss work or school to be here, yet I am still here. I contribute and participate in my surrounding academic community despite these obstacles, as I am committed and passionate about the optimization of myself and my peer's education.

Though I am fairly new to the University, my experience has been delineated by my involvement in various classes, ASUO, two nonprofit organizations and contributing to campus publications/forums, all of these being fulfilling outlets of education that I will not be able to continue if this board chooses to vote no. This same experience of higher education that I so gratefully operate in today is in complete jeopardy if this bill fails to pass. So I respectfully pose this question to the voting committee: how can one expect a student to optimize their education if they cannot afford the simple materials that act as a vehicle to that same learning? We want to contribute, we want to curate, we want to optimize this opportunity---but we cannot do so without the proper funding. Thank you for the time, please take this testimony into acute consideration when coming to a decision and most importantly, vote yes on bill HB 2214.

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