

Appendix C

Oregon Opportunity Trust – Reasons to Oppose

Investing in higher education is important, but Oregon hasn't yet been able to fully fund public schools, much less continue health coverage for low-income and disabled Oregonians. If we don't invest enough in K-12 education in Oregon, then students won't be prepared for any type of postsecondary education and it won't matter if they can't afford it. Let's put our money in K-12 and let college students pay for themselves since they get higher incomes later on anyway. Is it fair that high school graduates are paying for college students to get their degrees? Any additional financial aid from the state should be in the form of loans and not grants, since those benefiting from higher education are able to make more money and should be able to pay back whatever they borrowed to complete their higher education.

Money used to subsidize higher education just increases income taxes for Oregonians with little or no benefit to 80% of the state's residents. Senior citizens and low-income Oregonians can hardly survive as it is without subsidizing college students and having their taxes increase. Oregon has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation, with many Oregon communities in the double digits; our communities need investment in jobs, not college degrees. Maybe this is a good idea, but you can't squeeze blood from a stone. And I just don't believe you can pay for a grant program without increasing taxes, no matter what they tell us.

Rural Oregon doesn't benefit much from more need-based grant aid for higher education because most jobs in rural areas don't require a college education. We need jobs in rural Oregon, not more students going to college. By subsidizing students to go to college, the state is funding their exit from our smaller communities never to return. Why would we shoot ourselves in the foot? The benefit for us is just not there, and we don't think it's fair for rural Oregonians to subsidize city kids to go to college.

Even if it makes sense to provide more financial assistance to college students, it certainly shouldn't be memorialized in the constitution. While it's understandable that Oregon Opportunity Trust proponents want to put their trust in the constitution so that lawmakers won't be tempted to use the money for something else, that's not what the constitution is for. This could easily be set up in a way that avoided that risk. Oregon Opportunity Trust organizers envision a fund with \$1 to \$3 billion, accumulated over a period of years. Imagine how much else could be done in the state with that substantial amount of funding. We'll just never be able to do this, so why waste the time.

It's hard to envision how Oregon Opportunity Trust backers will find a revenue source that hasn't already been considered and discarded by lawmakers trying to balance the state budget, let alone manage to sock away billions for college scholarships. Since Oregon Opportunity Trust proposers claim that the trust will not divert existing dedicated general fund dollars, this must mean that increased taxes will be needed to help fund this

trust. It's just not realistic to even consider this. Let's spend our time and energy on a realistic plan, not pie-in-the-sky.