OPEN SCHOOL

February 9, 2017

Colt Gill
Chief Education Innovation Officer
Chief Education Office
775 Court Street NE
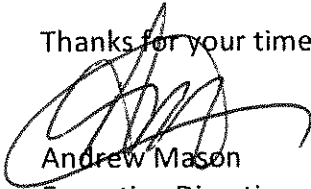Salem, OR 97301

Dear Mr. Gill,

This is a letter in support of the proposed Graduation Equity Fund (SB 183). As Oregon continues to lag the nation in four-year graduation rates for all students, with even lower rates for our students in poverty and our students of color, the Graduation Equity Fund is a mechanism that will work toward changing that dynamic.

You visited Open School during your listening tour in September. We showed you how Open School is in the process of scaling up a new program supported by the state with the goal of educating 300 students in grades 7-12. These students were all identified by their home districts as likely to drop out using a data-driven early warning system. Since coming to Open School these students have made multi-year gains in math and reading on standardized tests. This is what Oregon needs, as you have identified in the recently released *What Will it Take to Improve Graduation Outcomes* report.

Governor Brown's budget highlights her goal of increasing graduation rates and serving communities of color. Specifically, her budget calls out the need to identify at-risk students and support them through effective, culturally responsive practices and then put them on a path towards post-secondary education and employment. Your report calls for early indicator and interventions, wrap-around supports, and family engagement. That is what we do at Open School and what the Graduation Equity Fund will support. As you know we identify students through risk factors in elementary school, and keep them in school with our unique and relevant school environment. And in partnership with the University of Portland we are training a pipeline of aspiring instructors of color so other districts can take our successes into the mainstream classroom and support the next generation of students.

Please let me know how we can support the passage of this productive bill.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Andrew Mason
Executive Direction

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