



March 22, 2019

House Committee on Education
Oregon State Legislature

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

I am writing to encourage your support of House Bill 2939. As we are all well aware, despite continued progress, far too many of Oregon's young people are not graduating from high school. The road to a high school diploma is not a uniform path for all students and for those who face obstacles, there must be opportunities for second chances. We must re-engage those young people who, for many varied reasons, leave high school without a diploma.

Last year, more than 6,400 students left high school before graduation. Our state, our economy, and our families cannot absorb 6,000 out-of-school youth, without the most basic education credential, every year. In many Oregon communities, there are excellent opportunities for high school reengagement. However, those opportunities are not available in all communities and it is heart-breaking to have to tell a student that they are not eligible to enroll in a reengagement program because they live in the wrong school district. Second chances should not be contingent on a student's address.

Our current school accountability system creates disincentives for school districts to re-engage out-of-school youth. Under current conditions, school districts are taking an accountability risk when they re-engage students. HB 2939 can address and resolve those disincentives. HB 2939 can send a message to students and to school districts that reengaging out-of-school youth is a priority, not a liability.

Having worked with vulnerable youth in Oregon for more than 20 years, I am committed to do whatever it takes to bring our young people back to school. For the past three years, educators, advocates, and students from across the state have worked alongside you and your colleagues, sharing their expertise and their sweat to make this bill a reality. We are gratified to be at this stage and look forward to passing this bill during this session.

Representative Doherty, we appreciate your long-time leadership on this issue and on this bill. We hope that you and each member of this committee will continue to support this bill as it progresses through the legislative process. Thank you for your consideration and for your support of ALL of Oregon's young people.

Sincerely,

Nick Mathern
Vice President of Programs
Gateway to College National Network



529 SE Grand Avenue
Suite 300
Portland, OR 97214

www.gatewaytocollege.org