

March 26, 2019

Committee Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Thomsen, and members Geiser, Hass and Heard:

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of SB692/HB2939. I have worked in alternative education at the high school and college levels for over 25 years. I have worked in dropout prevention and re-engagement. In order to improve our outcomes for young people in Oregon, we must work to do two things at once:

a) prevent students from dropping out by putting better engagement and student support programming in place and  
b) reengage those who have left school.

- More than 6,000 Oregon students leave high school each year without a diploma.
- Current accountability policy creates disincentives for school districts to re-enroll out-of-school youth.
- Young people who do not earn a high school diploma or GED are significantly more likely to face unemployment, incarceration, and even shorter lifespans.
- Based on similar laws in Washington and Colorado, this bill (SB 692/HB 2939) will lead to the creation of more opportunities across the state for out-of-school youth to re-enroll in high school.
- Currently, in our alternative education policy, districts have the capacity to serve students using state school fund dollars up to the age of 21 regardless of whether they have an IEP or not. We need to leverage this ability with policy that removes the dis-incentives for districts to reengage students.

Please consider passage of this important legislation as another piece of the overall puzzle to serve every young person in our student and ensure that each individual has opportunity and access to not only a high school diploma or GED but also to the array of post-secondary career development opportunities that a secondary education affords them.

Sincerely,

**Jeff Laff**  
**Interim Director**  
**Links High School Programs**

(Pronouns: he, him, his)

**PCC Links Programs**  
*Empowering students through personalized support,  
educational innovation, and academic excellence.*



PCC Southeast Campus  
2305 SE 82nd Ave., Portland, OR 97216  
MTH 123e  
971-722-6125  
[www.pcc.edu/links](http://www.pcc.edu/links)