

April 18, 2019

Re: House Bill 3427

Joint Committee on Student Success:

My name is Noah Oken-Berg and I am the co-founder of Above The Fray Design and a member of Business for a Better Portland. I want to start by thanking this committee for its hard work over the past year. I'm proud to support the Student Success Act — because what's good for Oregon students is good for Oregon business.

I'm also here as a former PPS student whose son will soon enter that school system. I was a freshman at Lincoln High School when Measure 5 was passed, and I was a freshman in college when Measures 47 and 50 passed — with my younger siblings still in the thick of it.

I witnessed the disinvestment in Oregon classrooms: Class sizes ballooned, sports went from free to costing several hundred dollars, critical programs such as art and music were axed, and college tuition skyrocketed. I want better for my son and for all Oregon students.

I own my own growing business, and help to run another — both rapidly growing with a total of 40 employees. In our business, we work with folks all over the country. I hear all the time from other companies that are doing their homework and are attracted by the what Oregon has to offer in terms of jobs, culture, cuisine, and natural beauty — but they are concerned about the reports they've heard about the state of our schools.

We also build software for manufacturers of all sizes, and they are facing a looming crisis because of a lack of skilled technicians and tradespeople. This shortage is a crisis, but it also creates an incredible opportunity for Oregon to move ahead and lead the charge.

That's why I'm so glad to see full funding for K-12 career and technology classes in the Student Success Act, along with funding for smaller class sizes, greater access to early education, and other vital investments.

I strongly encourage you to add an investment in Career and Technical Education programs at our community colleges. These programs are extremely successful at addressing labor market demand and providing students of all ages with the skills needed for career success.

This bill should also invest in the Oregon Opportunity Grant, to provide college access to every Pell Grant-eligible student in the state.

It makes sense for businesses of a certain size to contribute at least \$2 Billion more in our students — it's the right thing to do and it's an investment with significant return. I urge you to amend and pass the Student Success Act this session!



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