



**Our Mission:**

To coordinate a regional workforce system that supports individual prosperity and business competitiveness.

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March 3, 2021

Oregon State Legislature  
House Committee on Education  
Representative Teresa Alonso Leon, Chair  
900 Court Street NE, Room 453,  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear House Education Committee Members:

On behalf of the Portland Metro Workforce Development Board, we are writing to express our support for HB 2092 and increased State investments in youth employment services and especially investments focused on low-income and historically marginalized young people. While the fall-out from COVID-19 is yet to fully unfold, it is clear young workers, and especially young workers of color, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and face the greatest challenges as we move towards economic recovery.

Subsidized employment has long been a successful strategy to engage and advance youth idled by job loss, discriminatory practices, limited experience, and lack of opportunity. It is also a proven way to stimulate the economy and speed economic recovery. The economic downturn caused by COVID-19 makes new investments in youth employment more needed now than ever.

Unfortunately, thousands of young workers were economically vulnerable before COVID-19. Prior to the pandemic, there were more than 15,000 young people between the ages of 16-24 in Multnomah and Washington counties who were not connected to school or work. The nation’s tepid response to the Great Recession delayed recovery and hit young workers and those with lower levels of education especially hard. A December 2019 article by Mathematica, found that Portland had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest youth unemployment rate of the 50 largest cities in the country at 11.1%. Further, Black, Indigenous and Hispanic youth were shown to have significantly higher rates of unemployment than their white counterparts. As we face another recession, we need to do everything possible to shore up strategies that work and avoid repeating our past mistakes, especially as it relates to young people of color.

To that end, we are encouraged that HB 2092 recognizes the disparate impacts faced by BIPOC Oregonians and sets-aside resources to address those communities and challenges. We also appreciate HB2092’s use of Local Workforce Development Boards as a conduit to coordinate resources and services at the local level. The coordination of new State investments in youth employment with other existing federal and local efforts is essential to building the partnerships and scale we need to combat the youth employment crisis.

One example of the value of working together is SummerWorks. Started in 2009, through partnership and collaboration, SummerWorks evolved from a single resource program that served about 200 kids a year, to a program that served more than 1,000 in 2019. Multiple funders and providers worked together to design, support and grow the program. Federal, state, local, philanthropic, and private sector resources are now combined to increase the number of youths served and broaden community engagement and impact. Through intentional focus and delivery, 91% of participants served through SummerWorks were economically disadvantaged and 71% were youth of color. So far, these young people have:

- Completed 7,070 internships
- Worked 898,992 hours
- Earned \$10,148,810 in wages

We look forward to sharing our learnings from SummerWorks and other youth employment efforts to support HB 2092 and new State investments to address and solve our youth employment crisis.

Your time and consideration are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew McGough', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew McGough  
Executive Director