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March 10th, 2021

Joint Committee On Education
Co-Chairs Senator Lew Frederick and Representative Susan McLain
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Request for full funding for Youth Development Department in HB 5513

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Committee:

I am writing today as the Chair of the Youth Development Council Workforce and Re-Engagement Committee, as the Executive Director of Northwest Youth Corps, and as the loving parent of two teenage boys. I am urging you to recommend full funding for the Youth Development Division Budget as presented by Brian Detman, the Oregon Youth Development Division Director.

My career in youth development and workforce engagement began 28 years ago. During that time, I have witnessed, firsthand, time and time again, the remarkable transformation that can occur when caring adults provide a supportive hand up to youth who are slipping through the cracks. As a member of the Youth Development Council, I have been able to see how the YDD investment in workforce and juvenile crime prevention programs interrupts systemic barriers and elevates communities across our great state.

The YDD Director was asked to describe a general fund reduction to this Committee for consideration as part of his budget presentation. If acted on, this reduction would hit the workforce development and juvenile crime prevention grant budgets the hardest – cutting the workforce reengagement investment alone by more than 60% - thereby reducing the number of youth and communities who benefit from these essential programs. These grant programs are a critical lifeline for thousands of youth across our state who face very difficult circumstances and are struggling to find success. I urge you to recommend full funding for the Division, so that we can continue to provide support for our leaders of tomorrow.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in support of our young people across the state who need our courage and leadership now more than ever before.

Sincerely,

Jeff Parker
Executive Director