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March 18, 2021

Oregon House Education Committee
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2412 Amendment-2

Dear Chair Alonso León and Members of the House Education Committee:

As President of Portland State University, I'm writing today to urge your support and adoption of the -2 amendment to HB 2412. The amendment includes funding for five different college access programs that are in the Governor's Recommended Budget. These five programs provide valuable access and support for students from low-income backgrounds, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and first-generation college students to help them achieve their post-secondary goals. I want to highlight three programs that impact over 1,000 students at PSU.

College Possible Oregon (CPO) makes college admission and success possible for students impacted by poverty through an intensive coaching and near-peer support curriculum. The program provides academic support through ACT/SAT test preparation, college application assistance, financial aid consulting, guidance on the transition to college, and comprehensive coaching until college degree completion.

BUILD EXITO is a three-year undergraduate research training program supporting students to become scientific researchers. It identifies historically underrepresented students in clinical, behavioral, biomedical, and health sciences early in their college careers and provides them with training through an enhanced curriculum, mentoring and advising, long-term research placements, and financial support for travel to scientific conferences. BUILD EXITO promotes student success by building collaborative relationships and creating student pathways linking community colleges, PSU, and Oregon Health and Science University.

TRIO, offers mentoring and advising support for low-income students, first generation college students, and students with disabilities throughout their time at PSU. TRIO assists students to strengthen the academic skills necessary for college through classes and workshops, find a sense of community through cultural and social enrichment activities, improve and maintain the grade point average needed to achieve academic goals, and graduate with a Bachelor's degree. PSU works with four high schools and four middle schools in Portland to provide college orientation activities, technology skill-building, career and college field trips, and academic workshops.

Each of these programs supports hundreds of students. They activate success and transform lives, helping students to graduate at higher rates than their peers. Over 200 students are the beneficiaries of College Possible Oregon and the dedicated support by CPO's near-peer mentor/coaches, including on-site support when students

can return in person. CPO's services also align well with scholarship donors who support historically underserved students. The student persistence rate is over 80%, and CPO keeps about 80% of its high school graduates in Oregon colleges and universities. CPO students are 100% from low-income backgrounds, 90% are the first in their families to graduate from college, 69% identify as BIPOC and 70% identify as female. I have personally experienced the program's positive and measurable impact on supporting students to and through college, and am thrilled to have CPO's students at PSU.

To date, BUILD EXITO has enrolled 537 scholars in six cohorts across partner institutions. The program has an 81% retention rate and at PSU, the four-year graduation rate for scholars enrolled in the program is roughly double that of their peers in the same majors. Of the 146 scholars who have completed the program with a BA/BS, 60% are employed in research positions or attending graduate school. A majority of scholars have experienced some form of disadvantage based on indicators such as need-based financial aid (71%), first-generation college status (61%), disability (14%), or history of foster care (8%). BUILD EXITO students are racially and ethnically diverse, with only 26% identifying as non-Hispanic white students.

PSU's had 1,119 enrollees across its four TRIO programs. 77% of PSU's Upward Bound students come from low income families where the parents do not have Bachelor's degrees. At the end of the 2019 academic year, 100% of program participants continued in school for the next academic year and 92% had a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. PSU's Educational Talent Search serves 685 low-income/first-generation students. In 2019, 100% of seniors served by the program graduated with a regular secondary school diploma within the standard number of years.

It matters today more than ever before. COVID-19 has laid bare the systemic inequities felt by BIPOC communities and communities impacted by poverty. According to the most recent data, across all types of institutions, immediate enrollment of students from low-income high schools fell 29.2%. These are particularly troubling findings because students from low-income backgrounds are much less likely to enroll in college later and get back on track.

Investing in these five programs in HR 2412 supports HECC's goals of increasing historically underserved students' pathways to access higher education and earn their degrees. It takes both a strong education system and community partners who deliver quality programs and measurable results to improve student outcomes across the state. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Percy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Percy
President
Portland State University