

March 18, 2021

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

RE: HB 2412, -2 Amendments

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the House Education Committee,

As the Superintendent of Beaverton School District, I'm writing today to urge your support and adoption of the -2 amendments to HB 2412. This amendment includes funding for five different college access programs that are in the Governors Recommend 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.

One such program is College Possible Oregon (CPO), whose mission is to make college admission and success possible for students impacted by poverty through an intensive coaching and near-peer support curriculum. They provide: (1) academic support through ACT/SAT test preparation; (2) college application assistance; (3) financial aid consulting; (4) guidance on the transition to college; and (5) comprehensive coaching until college degree completion.

COVID-19 has laid bare the systemic inequities felt by 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. CPO supports students through college by providing a near-peer mentor, access to resources, financial assistance and social-emotional support, including counseling services during these trying times.

I've seen first-hand that the program works. Despite the national data trends, CPO student enrollment (from high school to college) remained steady at 77%. Persistence rates (first year to the second year in college) increased to 82%.

CPO serves 500+ juniors and seniors from 15 high schools (seven in the Portland region and eight in rural Oregon) and 1,000+ college students (graduated from one of the 15 high schools) who are attending 100+ colleges and universities in the U.S (80% remain in Oregon to attend college). These 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.

District Goal: WE Empower all students to achieve post-high school success.

"The District prohibits discrimination and harassment based on any basis protected by law, including but not limited to, an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national or ethnic origin, marital status, age, mental or physical disability, pregnancy, familial status, economic status, veteran status, or because of a perceived or actual association with any other persons within these protected classes."

During my time as Superintendent of David Douglas School District, I experienced the program's positive and measurable impact on supporting students to and through college. As the Superintendent of Beaverton School District, I am thrilled to have this vital program serve students in our highest-need school, Aloha High School and would love to have the program expand to serve Beaverton High School when they are able.

Investing in these five programs 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 for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don Grotting". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Don Grotting