



Testimony on House Bill 2412
House Education Committee
March 18, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2412. HECC **supports** this bill as amended with the -2 amendment.

The proposed investments in the -2 amendment match the investments proposed in the 2021/2023 Governor's Recommended Budget, which provide \$1m each to five access oriented programs and organizations to continue their important missions and expand their critical reach.

Related specifically to HECC, this bill as amended would increase Oregon's investment in the Access to Student Assistance Programs in Reach of Everyone (ASPIRE) program by 50 percent for the 2021/23 biennium. ASPIRE is a program that matches trained, supportive volunteer mentors with middle and high school students to develop a plan to help them meet their education goals beyond high school. Currently, the program serves over 8,300 Oregon students by matching them with one of over 1,300 volunteers. ASPIRE works in partnership with over 140 sites across the state in rural and urban districts alike.

ASPIRE staff develop information, resources, and trainings for site coordinators who work to recruit and train volunteers and engage families on the issues of planning for postsecondary opportunities and utilizing financial aid. Funding provided by this bill will increase the number of ASPIRE sites and our ability to support them through additional staff. It will also build and refresh career training resources, expand summer activities for high school students transitioning into college, increase diversity, equity, and inclusion training for coordinators and volunteer mentors, and allow HECC to develop better and more technologically-based tools to reach students and be responsive to their needs.

From mentorship, tutoring, financial guidance, training educators, peer coaching, and exposure to exciting and growing fields, ASPIRE, College Possible, AVID, BUILD EXITO, and TRIO all play a part in helping students prepare for and realize postsecondary education opportunity and the advantages it offers. With the investments proposed by this bill as amended, they will continue to do so, and do so for a greater number of Oregon students. Please support this bill and its proposed investments.

Thank you.