



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 Reynolds 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. 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 has been partnering with Reynolds High School since 2013. We saw the value in the intentional support and resources the coaches provide and are working to double the capacity of the program. Beginning in 2021-22 school year, CPO will add a cohort of 40 juniors doubling the program size over the next two years from 80 students to 160 students. This increased capacity has a ripple effect beyond CPO students and helps increase the college-going culture at Reynolds. It means we will have four trained coaches working in the building to support events like FASA nights and family engagement and help us get the word out that college is an option for all our students. Additionally, I value the long-term commitment to serving students and knowing that our students will have the support they deserve beyond high school through college graduation.

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 blue ink that reads "Danna Diaz".

Dr. Danna Diaz  
Superintendent of Schools