

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,

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 were funded in the Governors Recommend Budget. These five programs provide valuable access and supports for low-income and historically underserved students and help them to achieve their post-secondary goals.

I have been connected to the Oregon TRIO Association (OTA) since its inception and am one of the founding members. I have served as President of OTA several times and, using our regional model from the Northwest Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (NAEOP), helped create its basic structure. Along with Geof Garner of MESD, I wrote the 501(c)3 and established the organization as a non-profit in 2010. When we first connected all TRIO programs in our state back in 2000, we immediately created a student leadership conference to inspire our students to pursue higher education. In 2013, we added professional development training for all staff.

Oregon continues to face large achievement gaps for students of color and low-income, first generation (LIFG) students served by TRIO. Due to the pandemic, conditions have only worsened. Recent research I did for Sonoma State TRIO Training indicates that about 20% of males of color have dropped out of the education system in the last two years. With the Governor's funding, the Oregon TRIO Association could assist in reversing this trend, particularly in expanding our pipeline from 2-year Student Support Services programs to the 4-year programs.

Please support the HB 2412 -2 amendments. The connections between AVID and TRIO in particular will be strengthened as we partner with one another frequently. The investment in students of color at this vulnerable time will help create a more equitable environment for access and success in higher education in Oregon. Two student stories are shared below.

Sincerely,

Phillip Dirks  
Retired Director, PSU Upward Bound/ Talent Search  
32 Years in Oregon TRIO  
Former President, Oregon TRIO Association



My name is Seanna (she/her/hers), and I'm now a senior double majoring in social science and Black studies. I came to PSU as a freshman, my journey began with The TRIO summer bridge program in 2017. While learning how to navigate life as a first-generation college student, I was also juggling between being a part-time worker and the eldest child of 5. My entire academic pursuit relied on the help I found within an education system or I was on my own. TRIO made sure I never felt alone during my entire undergraduate experience. And the connections I've made within the program have impacted my life immensely.

This past year I've worked as a peer mentor for Race and Social Justice within the University Studies Program alongside Professor Grace Dillon. Most of my academic work focuses on Black and brown children and other vulnerable members of society. After I graduate I have no steady plans since my interests and experiences vary. But if the option arises to further my education, I will; if the time isn't right, I won't rush it. But I know I will move on to some form of academic writing and/or informative writing. We will see!

More importantly I want to thank all the TRIO staff for always being there and helping close the gap between us and our education. Special thanks to Andrea Griggs, my college journey has been nothing my difficult and complicated and she's stayed by my side helping with anything I needed.



My name is Suzie Aguirre De Boque, and I am currently a senior at Portland State University. I am set to graduate this upcoming Spring term with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Japanese, a minor in Applied Linguistics, and a TEFL certificate. I would not have come this far in my journey towards graduation without the support of my family, close friends, and the TRIO Student Support Services program. My journey with TRIO started in my senior year of high school when I began submitting my college applications. As a first-generation student who had no guidance when it came to choosing which college to attend and what to do once accepted, the TRIO Student Support Services program made a great impact on my life by providing the resources needed to

have a positive and successful college experience. After high school graduation, I became a member of TRIO and promptly decided to participate in the Summer Bridge program for incoming freshmen. The Summer Bridge program was a great experience for me because I learned about the PSU campus and community before starting my first classes in the fall which ultimately helped lower my anxiety towards starting my college journey. Moreover, through the Summer Bridge program, I was able to make meaningful connections with other students who were in the same position as me so it made the transition into college easier and less intimidating.

Not only was I able to make meaningful connections with my peers and learn helpful information from the Summer Bridge program, but I was also able to form and strengthen my relationship with my

assigned advisor, Andrea Griggs. I cannot express how grateful I am for my advisor and all the exchanges we've had together. Having an advisor I could confidently seek guidance from and chat about things outside of regular academics made my college experience all the more enjoyable and fulfilling. Every month I looked forward to checking in with Andrea to catch up on life and work out my plans for the next term. Another aspect of TRIO that made my college experience go smoothly was the opportunity to register for classes early. Since classes tend to fill up quickly and registration opens at different times depending on your class standing, I was able to confidently register for classes without worrying about classes filling up before I could register. Having this opportunity helped me stay on track when it came to fulfilling my degree requirements and eased my stress while managing school and work.

After graduation, I plan to participate in the Japanese Exchange and Teaching Program as an assistant language teacher in Japan. I find the cooperative nature of language and culture exchange inspiring and have always aspired to pursue a career path that involved different aspects of intercultural communication. Through my coursework, I became involved with extracurricular activities in the Japanese department at PSU and was exposed to various opportunities where I could make meaningful connections with individuals from Japan and learn more about Japan itself. I learned of the JET program through these activities and soon made it my goal to apply to the program and gain experience working with international students in environments that promoted opportunities for intercultural communication and understanding. Later down the line after gaining experience from working abroad through JET, I hope to further my education by attending graduate school to pursue a master's degree in International Education Management. With graduation a few months away, I feel grateful for all the support and opportunities TRIO has provided me to have a positive and fulfilling college experience. I will use all the skills and information I have learned through my time in this program and at PSU in my future plans.