



March 18, 2021

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

FROM: Blair G. Darney, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor, OHSU School of Medicine and OHSU-
PSU School of Public Health

RE: HB 2412, -2 Amendments

Dear Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the House Education Committee,

I'm writing 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 Recommended Budget. These five programs provide valuable access and supports for low-income and historically underserved students to help them to achieve their post-secondary goals.

I have had the honor and pleasure of serving as a BUILD EXITO research mentor for several years and have seen first-hand how the investment in EXITO pays off for Oregonians. We often talk about the need to increase diversity in academia, science, and leadership, but rarely do we have the opportunity to experience *how* to make that happen. BUILD EXITO achieves this goal by identifying students early – in community college or early in their 4-year college pathway – and provides the academic, career, and social support necessary to set them up for success. And a success they are. The EXITO students with whom I have worked are dedicated, smart, and conscientious, and are actively engaged in public health collaborations and research that impact their communities. They are children of immigrants or immigrants themselves; their parents did not have the opportunity to attend college or even finish high school. In the face of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment, these EXITO scholars are developing research programs that seek to increase awareness of healthcare programs for immigrants in Oregon, increase ethnic diversity in clinical trials, and understand the role of acculturation in reproductive health behaviors and outcomes. These studies directly impact Latino Oregonians and have implications nationally.

In addition to developing and conducting research and presenting their work at University and state conferences, these EXITO scholars have engaged directly with state and national governmental agencies and local non-profits. I will provide 2 examples out of many. One student provided support to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) pilot testing changes to the

Obstetrics & Gynecology
Generalist Division
Family Planning Section

Mark D. Nichols, MD
Professor
nicholsm@ohsu.edu

Alison B. Edelman, MD, MPH
Professor
Fellowship Co-Director
edelmana@ohsu.edu

Jeffrey T. Jensen, MD, MPH
Professor
Leon Speroff Professor & Vice
Chair, Research
jensenje@ohsu.edu

Paula Bednarek, MD, MPH
Associate professor
Ryan Clinic Director
Bednarek@ohsu.edu

Blair G. Darney, PhD, MPH
Assistant Professor
darneyb@ohsu.edu

Maria I. Rodriguez, MD, MPH
Associate Professor
rodrigma@ohsu.edu

Maureen Baldwin, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor
schaum@ohsu.edu

Lisa Bayer, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor
Fellowship Co-Director
bayerl@ohsu.edu

Leo Han, MD, MPH
Assistant Professor
hanl@ohsu.edu

Alyssa Colwill, MD
Assistant Professor
colwill@ohsu.edu

Fellows:
Megan Cohen, MD, MPH
Shaalini Ramanadhan, MD

English and Spanish language enrollment forms for the Reproductive Health program with clients. Other scholars prepared a video presentation about reproductive health and state healthcare programs as part of International Women's Day activities at the Mexican Consulate in Portland, and in collaboration with the *Ventanilla de Salud*.

I have not only enjoyed working with EXITO scholars, I have also benefitted from the experience. I have learned more about the immigrant experience in Oregon, especially the unique challenges faced by essential workers during the COVID pandemic. Through providing mentorship for BUILD EXITO scholars, my own collaborations and program of research has expanded.

These EXITO scholars are planning to go into diverse fields: clinical research, social work, nursing, and socio-behavioral public health research. I have no doubt they will have productive and exciting careers serving Oregonians. Do not hesitate to contact me directly for more details of the powerful impact of the BUILD EXITO program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blair G. Darney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Blair G. Darney, Ph.D., M.P.H

Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, Oregon Health & Science University
Health Systems & Policy, OHSU/PSU School of Public Health

Profesora Investigadora Honoraria en Ciencias Medicas "E"
Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP), Cuernavaca, México

email: darneyb@ohsu.edu