

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 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 to help them to achieve their post-secondary goals.

I am the co-leader of a large, NIH infrastructure grant at OHSU that funds the Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute (OCTRI) to support translation of research findings into the community. As an example, we have recently supported research on of the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccines and most recently, research to understand the impact of so-called "long COVID." Recognition of the importance of understanding how COVID-19 affects *all* members of the community, as an example, includes having people of different races and ethnicities as part of the research team. BUILD EXITO has played a major role to expand and diversify our research teams. For the last 7 years, BUILD EXITO has created a strong association between OHSU and PSU for research career education and development; our OHSU faculty have provided mentorship and opportunities for up to 2 years of authentic research experience for more than 200 undergraduate students from PSU who are in the BUILD EXITO program. As a result, OHSU has observed a significant increase in our applicants to professional schools from disadvantaged students and students of color, plus many BUILD EXITO graduates have joined research teams at OHSU.

I am a PSU graduate (BS, 1978) who attended the school because of the opportunity to enter the biomedical research workforce at OHSU (then University of Oregon Medical School) while I was attending college. PSU was then and is now a school that supports working-class Oregonians who seek to jumpstart their career while staying close to home. I greatly appreciated the opportunities that came to me and now I am so honored to be able to provide these same opportunities to disadvantaged and minority students.

From my perspective, we are on a precipice where we can advance forward to benefit Oregon by diversifying the biomedical workforce, or we can regress into what we have experienced in the past, with a workforce that reflect those more affluent origins. Oregon can do better and can lead our population to better health, however this will take a diverse workforce. I urge you to support HB 2412 to support this education and career development.

Thank you,  
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