

Dear Co-chairs Frederick and McLain, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for your leadership and support for Oregon's STEM Hubs. This network has, as you know, been game-changing in improving equitable access to critical STEM learning for Oregon youth, both in and out of school.

I'm writing to respectfully encourage your support for the \$5.4 million STEM investment in the Oregon Department of Education budget in SB 5513. By making investments in Oregon STEM Hubs, STEM Innovation Grants, and Oregon Mathways, this critical funding will help us better serve students who have historically lacked access to STEM opportunities. Students of color, girls, students experiencing poverty, and rural students in particular benefit from the regional focus of the STEM Hubs.

As a STEM educator and rural Oregonian, I've experienced firsthand the benefits of Oregon's STEM Hub system and the investments they have made for students. As a parent of two young men poised to enter the workforce, I know it is so important to support initiatives that improve access for young Oregonians to the rapidly expanding opportunities that jobs in STEM provide.

The COVID pandemic has, as we know, made it extremely difficult to provide the types of learning experiences that STEM provides (hands-on, experiential, project-based). These impacts have disproportionately impacted students of color in particular. Now is an excellent time to reinvest in STEM opportunities as we navigate out of COVID and into recovery for our youth.

We know that robust STEM learning experiences lead to better outcomes for students and better prepare them to fully engage in our democracy and economy—promoting critical thinking skills and career-related skills. STEM Hubs play a crucial role in supporting this learning across the state, while providing leadership, technical assistance and professional development especially in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion.

I know that there are many important priorities for legislative funding this biennium, including advancing racial and social justice, response to growing incidents of catastrophic wildfire, and, of course, recovery from the pandemic (including preparing for a better response to future public health crises). Strong STEM education in Oregon serves all of these priorities. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,  
Daniel Prince  
Corbett, Oregon