



WILLAMETTE WORKFORCE
PARTNERSHIP

April 5, 2021

Chair Michael Dembrow,
Oregon State Senate Committee on Education
Maia.Daniel@oregonlegislature.gov
Sen.MichaelDembrow@oregonlegislature.gov
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the committee,

I am writing to express strong support of SB 623. Over the last year, Oregonians experienced unprecedented unemployment; systems were stretched, and the most vulnerable members of the population suffered the most. Today, the unemployment rate is double what it was a year ago, labor market participation is unbelievably low, and the rates of youth unemployment gravely concerning. The pandemic has disproportionately negatively affected low-income earners, low skilled workers, women, and people of color.

This situation creates an opportunity. An opportunity to analyze and make recommendations to changes in the existing system. We know there are places where the workforce system can address local situations with more targeted, community-specific outcomes in mind. This is a chance to examine the system, determine how to implement best practices, and look at ways to improve and change existing structures. We have learned a lot over the last year, and we cannot let those lessons be overlooked.

As the local workforce development board serving Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties, Willamette Workforce Partnership is working hard to address the needs of businesses and job seekers. The last year has been challenging for businesses recruiting new employees, as well as workers negatively impacted by the pandemic. Now is the time for us to respond and act.

SB 623 begins addressing these opportunities, and creates a path forward. Recovery from a crisis of this magnitude calls for immediate action with a long-term vision. SB 623, The COVID Recovery and Workforce Modernization Act of 2021 does both.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kim Parker-Llerenas

Executive Director
Willamette Workforce Partnership