

April 2, 2021

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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, The COVID Recovery and Workforce Modernization Act of 2021. 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 impacted low-income earners, low skilled workers, women, and people of color.

This situation creates an opportunity to analyze the existing workforce system and make recommendations to changes to address these issues. 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.

SEDCOR focuses on supporting and growing traded-sector businesses in the Mid-Willamette Valley Region of Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties. The key industries on which we focus, which include advanced manufacturing, agriculture/food processing, wood products, logistics/distribution, and aviation, depend on a system that provides a skilled workforce and a pipeline of future workers to sustain growth and economic prosperity in the region. We need to identify ways by which underserved populations can be engaged in a workforce system that will help them meet the workforce needs of our employers.

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,

