

April 19, 2021

Joint Ways and Means Committee
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2412A – Funding for ASPIRE, AVID, BUILD EXITO, CollegePossible & TRiO

Chair Co-Chair Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair Dan Rayfield, and Co-Chair Elizabeth Steiner Hayway.

I'm writing to you today to urge you to support and fund HB 2412A. This bill provides funding for five different college access programs that were funded in the Governor's Recommended Budget. These programs provide valuable access and support for students from low-income backgrounds, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and first-generation college students to help them achieve their post-secondary goals.

One of the programs on the line is AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, a program that helped my siblings and me have the resources to become successful. Being the oldest in my immediate family and a first generation Mexican-American is not easy, especially when I had dreams of going to college... I knew I *needed* higher education, but I had no clue where to start. Thanks to AVID, doors in my life opened that allowed me to win a full-ride scholarship to Warner Pacific University. The education and preparation I received from my AVID class and the relationships I built with mentorships from teachers in the school from this program were life changing. I developed leadership skills to return to my community and make an impact.

As the first in my family to attend undergraduate and then graduate school, my life is a testament to how programs funded by HB 2412A make a difference. I've returned to my old high school and, as a second year secondary mathematics and biology teacher, I'm now also teaching AVID. College access programs instill in students growth mindsets, grit, determination, persistence and leadership qualities. Programs like AVID are positively shifting and developing a stronger community in Oregon—a community with committed, educated, transformative individuals seeking to improve the quality of life for themselves and their communities.

Investment in these programs matters today more than ever before. This pandemic has laid bare systemic inequities felt by BIPOC communities and communities impacted by poverty. According to the most recent data, across all types of institutions, immediate enrollment of students from low-income high schools has fallen by nearly 30%. These finds are more troubling because students from low-income backgrounds are much less likely to enroll in college later and get back on track.

Investing in these five programs in HR 2412A supports Oregon and the HECC's goals of increasing historically underserved students' pathways to access higher education and earn their degrees. It takes both a strong education system and community partners who deliver quality programs and measurable results to improve student outcomes across the state. Please consider supporting all the students with dreams and aspirations of one day serving our communities through careers only accessible with higher education, by supporting and funding HB 2412A you are investing in our futures. I am only one testimony— there are countless others. Programs like AVID give wings to reach what was once only a dream, these programs make goals reality.

Programs like these are transformative and I strongly urge the committee to pass and fund HB 2412A.

Sincerely,

Alejandra Garcia

Alejandra Garcia
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