

April 20, 2021

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

RE: HB 2412A – Funding for ASPIRE, AVID, BUILD EXITO, College Possible & TRIO

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

I am writing 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 Recommend 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.

The Oregon TRIO Association (OTA) represents 48 TRIO programs and 11,350 low income, first generation and underserved students across the state. OTA has been assisting underrepresented and historically marginalized students since its inception in 2000. Our association provides leadership experiences for all students and professional development for all TRIO staff. Oregon benefits when its citizens graduate from college, and when a TRIO student graduates, the entire family benefits and is also motivated to pursue higher education.

Oregon continues to face large achievement gaps for students of color and low-income, first generation (LIFG) students served by TRIO. Investment in these programs matters today more than ever before. COVID-19 has laid bare the 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 findings are more troubling because students from low-income backgrounds are much less likely to enroll in college later and get back on track. With the Governor's funding, the Oregon TRIO Association could assist in reversing this trend, not only in our pre-college programs, but also by expanding our pipeline from 2-year Student Support Services programs to the 4-year SSS programs.

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

Sincerely,

Phillip Dirks
Retired Director, PSU Upward Bound/ Talent Search
32 Years in Oregon TRIO
Former President, Oregon TRIO Association