

May 3, 2021

Oregon Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Education
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Investment in College Possible Oregon

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education, my name is Hao Tran and I am a junior at David Douglas High School. I'm here today to urge your support of the 2021-23 Governor's Recommended Budget request for a \$1 million investment in the HECC budget for College Possible Oregon.

I was born in a middle income household in the outside district of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. I came to the US with my parents in 2016 with hopes for a better future. My parents have always wanted me to achieve things that they didn't have a chance to do, such as finish high school, get a college degree and live a happy life with a meaningful career. As an immigrant, going to a four year university is one of my ultimate goals. However, I didn't have anyone that I could really talk to. Both of my parents don't speak English, and they didn't have a chance to pursue a higher education in the past.

Sophomore year, in school, we learned how to build resumes, improve communication skills, and looked into colleges. Stanford, Yale, Harvard, University of Oregon, Oregon State, Reed College and among other schools were on my list. As I looked at each school, the only word that I had in mind was *Expensive*. How can a student with no certificate or job experience that comes straight out of high school would be able to pay those prices? Not to mention the fact that how stressful it would be to compete with many many others applicants to get into your dream schools. I was lost.

Over the summer, I decided to find answers and different ways to potentially take care of my education. There was FAFSA, but what is that? There were many scholarships on the internet, but which sites can I trust? Is it the one that has colorful images of money bags? Certainly not. My dream of going to college suddenly became a nightmare. I didn't know where to start, where to look, and where to get help.

I decided to apply for College Possible in fall of 2020. For me, it was a little intimidating at first because a lot of my friends were also applying for the program as well. I was worried that I wouldn't receive as much help as I needed. However, once I got in, it wasn't the case at all. My coaches made it super clear that even though with all the virtual meetings— they will make sure that they will give us group sessions as well as one on one session each month.

In College Possible, I can see "trust" being built. Other students and I know that our coaches do make an effort to give us all the attention. Just from the amount of internship, scholarships, and the summer programs they sent out to us — we *know* that they really care. They really do care.

They also send out memes and jokes in each of the check-in emails. They want us to feel comfortable in the program and understand that going to college is something that we — as high school students don't have to be afraid. Don't just take my word for it, if you ask any College Possible students in our class, I can assure you that most of them would say College Possible has been super helpful. I am grateful for my coaches for knowing that I could always turn to them when I need to. I am also grateful that I was just lucky enough to be in the program. If someone asked me what the biggest turning points were in my education, joining College Possible is one of them.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story today.

Sincerely,
Hao Tran
David Douglas High School Student