

April 6, 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 Fama Gedi, I'm an alumna of College Possible Oregon. I'm writing to request you support the 2021-23 Governor's Recommended Budget requests of a \$1 million investment in the HECC budget for College Possible Oregon.

I was one of the first students to participate in College Possible when they first started in Oregon. As the phenomenal Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" and that is true for me. It has been eight years since my first College Possible coach, Paige has comforted me about my horrible ACT practice test, yet I still remember the feeling of being cared for.

My love for learning began in 5th grade. I have always known that I wanted to receive higher education. Saying it was the easy part, but as we know, words without plans are meaningless.

It was not until I transferred to David Douglas High School that the vision of higher education started to become clear. 2013 was the first year of College Possible at our school and I applied for the program thinking "this is it" and it honestly was.

Junior year, we met twice a week for three hours after school building relationships, practicing for the standardized test, visiting colleges and writing college essays. At the beginning of each session, my coach Paige would ask questions: What are your motivations in life? What activities bring you joy and energy? Or how can she be a better coach? At first, it was annoying because all I wanted to do was get over the practice ACT without getting a headache. However, I did not realize those check-ins were not a waste of time, but were her way of getting to know us. It was her way of building a relationship with each of us.

When I received my score for the practice ACT, I felt sick to my stomach and walked out of the classroom. Paige came after me in the middle of a session and I remember her holding onto my shoulder with a caring expression. I cannot recall what she said, but "you got this" kept repeating in my head. I stayed in touch with Paige over the years via Facebook. She had a good balance of being a coach, a friend and fun. Now that I am a little more mature, I realized that she genuinely cared about the program's mission and us. She cared about our wellbeing and who we were beyond test scores.

There are many college readiness programs but there ain't none like College Possible. Coaches like Paige are honest, genuine and trustworthy. And for that, I am grateful for coaches like Paige, Michael, Tess, Theresa, and College Possible as a whole.

I attended the University of Oregon and it honestly was the best four years of my education. I had a close-knit community that became my family away from home. They have inspired me, challenged me, and allowed me to grow spiritually, mentally, and intellectually. I have also gained the skills to take action on issues that mattered to me, as well as two best friends that I have known since freshman year in Carson Hall, C-5.

Now that I've graduated, I am utilizing the skills and knowledge I have gained from my Family and Human Services degree as a Professional Female Mentor with a nonprofit called Friends of the Children-Gresham. Their mission is to prevent generational poverty, no matter what, with vulnerable youth. I am proud of myself for securing my first big girl post-graduate position—and keeping it through a pandemic. I am excited for the relationships I'm creating with my girls and my staff.

Thank you for considering supporting College Possible for future college graduates like myself.

Sincerely,

Fama Gedi

David Douglas High School, Class of 2015

University of Oregon, Class of 2019

College Possible Alumna