

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 Janell Kim, 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 joined College Possible in high school in 2014. It was back-to-school night around the beginning of my junior year at David Douglas High School, and my mom and I had just finished picking up my fall schedule and meeting some of my new teachers.

We rounded the corner where we came upon the college and career readiness designated location in the hallway in front of the gym. Eager to get home and hoping to avoid any more conversations, I stared at the floor as I quickly ushered my mom down the hall. Halfway through the hallway bustling full of people, my mom stopped me and pointed to a table that flickered green and white in the corner of my eyes. "Why don't you take a quick look at that table?" I lifted my eyes and saw the big green words "College Possible" strewn across a white banner. Even though I did not have any concrete plans or even ideas for college, as a teacher's pet, perfectionist, and achiever, I felt drawn to the table. The coach at the table quickly gave me the appropriate information and encouraged me to sign up, so I did. I did not realize what that one sheet of paper held in store for my future.

I attended College Possible twice a week for that entire year; if I remember correctly, it was every Monday and Wednesday after school. It was there that I entertained the thought of going to a 4-year university as we spent grueling hours preparing for the ACT. During our time together, my first College Possible Coach Maggie quickly recognized the potential that I had by looking at my grades, course schedule, and extracurricular activities and she encouraged me to apply for summer enrichment programs. I had never heard of summer enrichment programs prior to her mentioning them, and we started to look for different opportunities that I was eligible for. Together, we came across a program called LEDA, or Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America. This program was for high-achieving, low-income high school juniors and its aim was to provide access to higher education to

students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. I completed my application with Maggie's guidance and support as she edited my application and wrote one of my letters of recommendation. During the process and after submitting my application, imposter syndrome kicked in and I doubted that I would ever even hear back. But Maggie never doubted me.

After passing round one of applications, an interview, and round two of applications, I finally received the email that said "Congratulations — LEDA Cohort 11 Welcomes You." This acceptance illuminated to me the potential that Maggie knew was in me but that I could not see in myself before. I was able to attend this free, seven-week intensive program at Princeton University where I received ACT Preparation, extensive leadership training, and college guidance and partook in a college writing course taught by a Columbia University writing professor. Because of this program that I was led to through College Possible, I was able to apply to ten colleges at absolutely no cost and eventually ended up attending Washington University in St. Louis for free. I graduated from WashU in May 2020 with a degree in Educational Studies with a minor in Psychology.

Words cannot describe how thankful I am for having had the privilege and experience of participating in College Possible during my time in high school. College Possible opened my eyes to my own potential. College Possible also exposed me to the larger, inequitable, and oppressive systems at work that permeates our society, particularly in higher education access, and disadvantage students from particular backgrounds, ultimately affecting future employment and predicted income and life outcomes. As such, my experience in College Possible, coupled with my passion for education, has me now working as a college adviser through another AmeriCorps program called College Advising Corps. The mission of College Advising Corps is similar to that of College Possible: to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented high school students who enter and complete higher education. I am excited to join in this work, and I am forever grateful for the positive impact that College Possible has had on my life.

Words cannot describe how thankful I am for having had the privilege and experience of participating in College Possible. College Possible opened my eyes to my own potential.

Sincerely,

Janell Kim

David Douglas High School, Class of 2016

Washington University, Class of 2020

College Possible Alumna