



WILLAMETTE CAREER ACADEMY



May 7, 2021

Co-Chair Fred Girod, Co-Chair Paul Holvey
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 5534 Capital Construction Request for Willamette Career Academy - \$6,921,150

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey,

The Willamette Career Academy (WCA) was formed out of a private-public partnership between Mountain West Investment Corporation (MWIC) and Willamette Education Service District (WESD). The WCA is modeled after the Salem-Keizer School District's outstanding Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC) and Clark County, Washington's highly successful Cascadia Technical Academy. These programs have experienced robust participation and enthusiasm by both students and industry partners alike.

The 47,000 sq/ft facility (the former *Toys-R-Us* building on Lancaster Drive in Salem) was purchased in February 2020 and renovations began in April of 2020. All permits and approvals are in place, and phase-one renovations are underway.

When completed, the WCA will serve 480 students annually, from 11 school districts, and across 3 counties, including rural and remote schools. Already, over 380 kids have signed up to be part of our initial cohort – including 122 from Woodburn, 61 from Silverton, 47 from North Santiam, 46 from Gervais, and 39 from Cascade.

WCA will open in the fall of 2021 offering the first three of six planned career tracks. The initial programs will be: **Health Services, Diesel Mechanics, and Cosmetology**. The remaining programs will open in the fall of 2022 and will include: **Manufacturing, Construction, and Information Technology**. It's important to note that programs' selection and design were the result of a collaborative process that included input from regional school districts, industry partners, parents, and students. Local, regional, and state labor market information was also used to inform the selection of programs, and industry needs and projections factored strongly into the decisions.



Project Need

There are over 84,000 students in the WESD region that attend twenty-one school districts in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties. There are 34 high schools, and the majority of these schools are considered rural and remote. Students do not have access to state-of-the-art career and technical education programs and opportunities. The local economy in many of these communities is limited and often depressed, and that includes education and training opportunities for high demand and living wage jobs. Many students end up dropping out, or not completing high school. There is a lack of career awareness and exploration in many of these schools due to their size and location, which is directly tied to school performance and graduation rates.

Although many of our regional districts have made strides toward improving high school completion rates, the challenges posed by limited size and location will not be overcome without a greater level of involvement in a regional strategy that both pools shared resources among districts and leverages maximum regional and state partnerships among other community, industry, and government stakeholders. Regional school district superintendents and school boards are committed to the WCA and have pledged support and resources. This state-of-the-art program will prepare students for in-demand jobs, and provide access to further education and training in key career pathways.

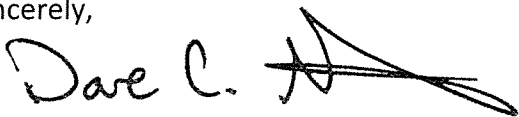
There is ample evidence to confirm there is a direct correlation between CTE and graduation from high school; and a direct correlation between a high school diploma and future earnings. These are two key measurable outcomes for the WCA, as well as the industry credentials and certification students will be able to earn.

The WCA will provide high school students opportunities to learn about and explore options in the six career areas. In addition to graduating from high school on time, students will be prepared to enter the workforce and pursue further education and training. All WCA programs will be articulated with post-secondary colleges and programs including Chemeketa Community College, and will provide students a path to enroll in an apprenticeship program and pursue further training and industry credentials.

We believe the WCA is exactly what lottery bonds were created to support – as it furthers both educational opportunities and economic growth for the region.

Please support the Willamette Education Service District's request for \$6,921,150 in lottery bonds to complete the Willamette Career Academy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave C. Novotney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dave Novotney, Ph.D.
Superintendent, Willamette ESD