



Youth 71:Five MINISTRIES

"Lord God, you are my hope. I have trusted you since I was young." Psalm 71:5 icb

To Whom It May Concern:

The State of Oregon is facing a workforce crisis within high-demand vocational trades. Throughout the State, emphasis has been focused on equipping youth to fulfill this critical labor force need through the investment in STEM and CTE Vocational trades learning such as SB 1545 Future Ready Oregon. Unfortunately, trained youth under the age of 18 are unable to be employed in most occupations where power tool operation is required (Child Labor Bulletin 101 WH1330 REV 11/16). This impassible years-long roadblock discourages them from entering the vocational trades and limits the ability of employers to utilize trained and certified youth to meet their labor needs crisis. These same restrictions do not apply in the agricultural industry and 15–17-year-old individuals can certainly use without supervision, a power tool called an automobile. It would be extremely productive to align power tool labor laws to what is currently being allowed in agriculture and the department of motor vehicles where young people may drive machinery and use power hand tools to work in vocational occupations.

The state of Oregon has done a fantastic job in recent years recognizing and prioritizing the needs of Opportunity Youth. 71five's vocational training program called 71Five VoTech has thrived due to this prioritization. These young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from both education and the workforce struggle with the effects of relational poverty, frozen conclusions of failure, and hopelessness that life can be different. Most are disconnected because they struggle with self-motivation, self-discipline, and the maturity to see what the future could hold. We have been able to connect with many Opportunity Youth in our community but we have inadvertently created a pathway with a dead-end for 16 and 17 year-old young people. We have given them great training, challenged them to mature, and built enthusiasm for a living wage career but lead them to severe disappointment when they learn they must wait a year or two before they can put their skills to work. We have witnessed young people come through our program, hit this dead-end and with no interest in working for the fast-food or retail industries, fall back into the definition of Opportunity Youth.

My hope is that we could give Opportunity Youth who are 16 and 17 a real opportunity to get connected to the workforce, begin a living wage career, and allow businesses to fill vacant jobs. These young people will get connected to the workforce and in many cases continue their education due to the required training necessary in their trade. I firmly believe we will see many of these young people thrive individually and strengthen our community.

Sincerely,

