
Success, Achievement, Together...for All Students

Written Testimony for HB2722 | House Committee on Business and Labor
February 20, 2023

Chair Holvey, Vice Chair Elmer, Vice Chair Sosa, and Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor. On behalf of the Willamette Education Service District (WESD), we are pleased to provide public comment on behalf of the school districts we represent in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to the House Committee on Business and Labor members for their continued leadership and dedication to creating seamless pathways for students entering the workforce directly from K12.

Over the last few years, our agency has been on the cutting edge of creating career pathways and opportunities for students in our region. We created a service called Control Tower that focuses on taking a regional approach to tackle Career Connected Learning (CCL) in collaboration with our business and industry partners. Two years ago, we launched the Willamette Career Academy (WCA). The WCA harnesses the power of connection and collaboration and has become a successful regional hub for CTE innovation. Both of these services continue to grow rapidly, with more school districts around the region wanting to utilize these high-quality services provided by our agency to prepare students for a career pathway.

Although we build on successes and have broken down barriers with our partners in establishing student career pathway opportunities, we continue to experience challenges and significant barriers in getting students to engage effectively with industry. Many of our business partners are hesitant to work with us to provide opportunities to students in the Construction and Manufacturing sectors because of the limitations in what work can be performed by 16 and 17-year-old youth. In order to build a future workforce and fill gaps in our economy in specific sectors, it is critical that we eliminate barriers between education and the workforce.

Additionally, the introduced legislation is critical for the education sector and our CTE programs. Work-based learning experiences, where students enrolled in a CTE program can experience their chosen pathway, are no longer optional. Current age restrictions hold up the ability to engage in this work. Students must have sustained experiences and interactions with the workforce while enrolled in robust programs of study.

As we strive to create equitable access and opportunities for all students across Oregon, we must develop systems that allow students to learn and engage in real-world work-based learning opportunities. Likewise, our local economy depends on a steady flow of skilled workers

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to support the infrastructure and industries that keep Oregonians working. Together, we can shift the trajectory and positively impact workforce development.

As such, we strongly encourage the House Committee on Business and Labor to support House Bill 2722.

Sincerely,



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Willamette ESD



Johnie Ferro, Principal
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Adam Whalen, Willamette Promise Coordinator
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