

Chair Neron and Members of the Committee

My name is Aaron Cooke, and I am a Program Manager at the Southern Oregon ESD for our Grow Your Own program. I was asked to briefly discuss our program and projects we are working on. The Southern Oregon Grow Your Own program focuses on five major aspects of expanding, and diversifying the educational workforce.

1. Establishing clearer and more efficient pathways for any candidate seeking educational licensure.
2. Promote the advancement of paraprofessionals sponsored by districts into teaching.
3. Develop and support CTE Dual Credit Cadet Teaching programs in regional High Schools
4. Work to promote teaching as a profession to a wider audience including communities of color and linguistically diverse candidates.
5. Support retention of GYO Candidates through initial years of teaching.

This work includes providing financial support to candidates as well as guidance and partnering with them through the degree, and licensing phases of their career. We are also very involved in the creation of new Cadet Teaching opportunities in partnership with our regional CTE Coordinator. Our goal is to find ways for all High School students interested in pursuing a career in education to have access to dual credit programs of study for guidance. While we are not there yet we have doubled the number of programs since GYO was started in our region. This year we are looking to add that number again.

We also work with our Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) to strengthen our regional opportunities for teacher preparation. To this end we supported Southern Oregon University in creating four proposals to bring back bachelor's programs in Secondary Education with endorsement areas of Language Arts, Spanish, Music, and Health & PE. We plan to support proposals for Math, Science, and Social Studies this year. These programs will significantly reduce the time and cost to prepare secondary staff. We also work with our Community Colleges with the goal of creating universal pathways to simplify creating new Cadet Teacher programs.

Moving forward we want to develop more retention based activities, and additional outreach to our local tribal members and cultural community groups. This will support our candidates once they are placed in the region. However, funding has remained flat through all three years of the program. Coupled with inflation this may lead to difficulties in expanding our work.

I would like to thank the members of the committee and ask that you consider this information when deciding HB 3177.

Thank you.

Aaron Cooke