

March 17, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
House Committee on Education
Delivered electronically via OLIS

Johnie Ferro:

Chair Neron, Members of the House Committee on Education, my name is Johnie Ferro, and I serve as the principal of the Willamette Career Academy. As a representative of our 250 students, I ask that this committee support HB3236, ultimately providing \$2,850,000 per biennium to this unique approach to education.

You see, I witness innovation, collaboration, and achievement every day. Our students have found a program of study that aligns with their career goals and have access to teachers with industry expertise and a true commitment to teaching the next generation of workers. Studies show that students with a strong connection to their school and at least one trusted adult are more likely to experience academic success and mental and behavioral health benefits like reduced absenteeism, increased motivation and engagement, and reduced emotional distress. I'm proud to say that when we asked our students about their experience over 80% of them shared that they feel connected and have a strong sense of belonging at WCA.

That sense of belonging flows from their experience in WCA classrooms to increased success in completing their Career Technical Education and High School diplomas. Last year, our students had a graduation rate of 97.65%, over 36% higher than the state average. As a result, WCA students are walking across the graduation stage with more diplomas in hand. At the WCA, students earn college credits, certifications, and licensures.

Our goal is to give all students a competitive advantage, which is especially important to students from historically underrepresented groups and underserved rural communities. WCA supports a diverse student population, with 55.9% identifying as Black, Indigenous, and people of color. At the WCA, all students are welcome and united in shared goals for career readiness.

Thank you for your time and support.



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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee, My name is Dandy Stevens.

As the superintendent of Gervais School District, I see the partnership between my district and the Willamette Career Academy as an extension of our mission to support our growing diverse community by raising prepared, resilient students. The academic and career preparedness of our students is a cornerstone to the success of our community. The WCA allows us to provide Career Technical Education without having to build an independent CTE program. We know that often our students are important contributors to the family's finances. Experiences at WCA allow our students to elevate their family's economic situation through securing higher wage jobs once they're out of high school.

Beyond the value to the community, I also see WCA's value to individual students. I encourage all students to apply because I've seen how that participation ties in with their academic success, engagement in school, and excitement for the future. I pay for additional slots even when it can be difficult for my small district to manage financially because I won't deny a student who really wants this opportunity from participating in such a life-changing program.

To briefly quote one of my students, Natalie Gieselman, a Senior at Gervais High School, the "WCA has set me years ahead of my peers by not only helping me earn a national certification, but also giving me connections and experiences that I would not have gotten without WCA."

The last few years have been challenging for our students as virtual learning and career uncertainty eroded their sense of belonging, motivation, and hopefulness. At Gervais, we're dedicated to supporting students' mental health and vision for the future. The WCA is a block that we depend on for building our momentum and success. As a superintendent with a bright generation of students, I ask for you to stand by one of the keys to our success and support Willamette Career Academy through House Bill 3236.

Thank you for your time and support.



March 16, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

As the Chief Operating Officer of Praxis Health, Oregon's largest independent network of healthcare providers, I see how the ripples of health staffing challenges affect the community. Shortages on every level of our healthcare infrastructure cause critical delays and reduce the accessibility of care for all Oregonians. This is one of the reasons that I am such a strong supporter of the Willamette Career Academy and of House Bill 3236.

Students from all over our region have an interest in pursuing careers in health and medical fields, but not all high schools have the resources to develop their own CTE programs. The WCA helps to fill that gap and support students' goals while allowing them to engage in healthcare internships, complete the certified clinical medical assistant certification, and earn credits towards their degrees.

As a diverse community, we need a diverse healthcare workforce. By offering opportunities to students from diverse and underrepresented populations, the WCA connects students to their careers, reduces the academic disparities that can hold students back, and boosts students to their next steps.

All Oregonians are strengthened by the success of students who are connected to their career interests. These health and medical students, who have already demonstrated their resilience, are able to tap into their compassion and direct it to patient and community care. This direction builds their engagement, motivation, and mental well-being. I'm excited by the rising generation of healthcare workers who are well-educated, empowered in their education, and given every tool at our disposal for their success. As a representative of healthcare workers throughout the state of Oregon, I ask for your support of Willamette Career Academy as a program that promotes equity, student health, and academic success. Please vote yes on House Bill 3236.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Olson, MHA, DPT
Chief Operating Officer, PraxisCare
Regional Administrator, Praxis Health



Willamette Career Academy

Supporting HB 3236

Providing Innovative Partnerships between Education & Industry



Who We Are

The **Willamette Career Academy (WCA)** is harnessing the power of connection and collaboration and has become a successful regional hub for career/technical innovation. The program continues to grow and currently serves students and business partners in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties.

Entering its second year, the WCA is now offering six different educational programs to help address the demand for highly-skilled workers in our region, as our invested industry partners requested. The educational programs are **Cosmetology, Health Services, PAPÉ Diesel Technology, Construction Technology, IT/Computer Science, and Freres Manufacturing Technology.**

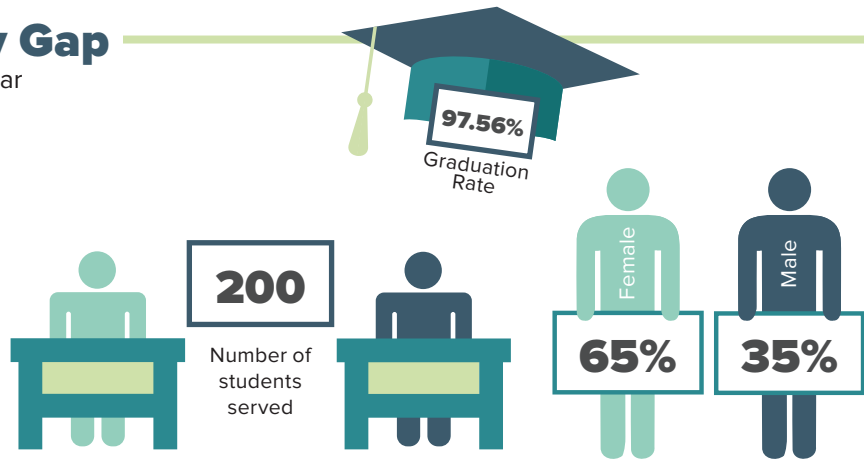
The Willamette ESD (WESD), representing the region's 21 school districts, has been operating the WCA and has plans for continuous improvement for the school's long-term success.

Closing the Opportunity Gap

WCA Student Data for the 2021-22 School Year



- 55.9% BIPOC Total**
 - .4% African American
 - 1.3% Alaskan/Native American
 - 52% Hispanic
 - 1.3% Multi-Racial
 - .9% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 44.1% White Total**



First Large Scale In-State Model of Regional Education

While other states have implemented regional career and technical center model, this project represents the first of its kind in Oregon. WESD is proud to demonstrate the value and viability of providing more opportunities and hands-on learning that students crave and industry demands.

“Feeling that they were truly doing something positive for their futures!”

~ WCA Students, when asked what they valued most from their experiences

Project Costs

We'd like to ask the Oregon Legislature to commit \$2,850,000 dollars to the Willamette Career Academy for the 2023-25 biennium. This funding will provide operating costs, work-based learning, internships, apprenticeship opportunities, and access to high-quality educators to teach our students.

Request: \$2,850,000 per Biennium

Regional Impact

District superintendents and school boards have fully committed to the WCA and have supported it during its first year of welcoming students. This state-of-the-art school prepares students for in-demand jobs in six popular programs and can also provide access to further education and training in those career pathways. This ongoing influx of highly skilled workers into our region will make our local counties more attractive to business and industry investments. The WCA plans to support over 450 students when operating at full capacity.

Industry partners have lined up with financial and programming support, demonstrating the urgent and intense need for skilled labor. Programs like the WCA showcase Oregon Legislators' commitment to career and technical education and providing the next-generation workforce that is desperately needed.

Student Stories



Isela Chavez Martinez
WCA Cosmetology Student
Isela plans on becoming a lash technician and eventually owning her own business. She was excited to attend WCA because she knew she would be able to pursue her future goals a lot sooner.



Drew Kuenzi
WCA Diesel Technology Student
Drew's plans include becoming a certified Diesel Technician and owning a business. He is thankful for the staff who have helped him to develop his skills and pushed him to think about his future.

Ongoing Needs

Discovered during the 2021-22



Participating School Districts

All of our 21 regional partners have access to the WCA.

Marion County School Districts

Cascade School District
Gervais Schools
Jefferson School District
Mt. Angel School District
North Marion School District
North Santiam School District
Silver Falls School District
St. Paul School District
Woodburn School District

Polk County School Districts

Falls City School District

Yamhill County School Districts

Newberg School District

Partners



Learn more at www.willamettecareeracademy.com/regionalimpact

Success, Achievement, Together...for All Students

How House Bill 3236 Qualifies for Funding Under the Statewide Education Initiatives Account

The Willamette Career Academy (WCA) was created to support regional school districts in meeting Oregon's education needs as outlined in the Statewide Education Initiatives Account (SEIA), with a focus of creating more options for a well-rounded education for historically underserved students through the Willamette region.

The WCA consistently demonstrates SEIA's purpose, growth targets, and focus areas.

- **Meet student's mental and behavioral health needs**

- Students who have a strong connection to their school and at least one trusting adult are more likely to experience academic success, reduced absenteeism, increased motivation and engagement, and reduced emotional distress. Over 80% of WCA students surveyed said they feel connected and have a strong sense of belonging at WCA.

- **On-time graduation, Ninth Grade on-track rates, and 5 year completion**

- The WCA has demonstrated a graduation rate of 97.65%, compared to Oregon statewide graduation rates at 93% for Career Technical Education (CTE) high school completers and 61% for high school students not involved in CTE.

- **Increase academic achievement for students, including reducing academic disparities.**

- The WCA reduces academic disparities by supporting a diverse student population (55.9% of students at the WCA identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and closes the achievement gap between rural and urban high school students. The WCA does this work by offering accredited classes through a consortium model where regional high schools can participate in high-quality programs equitably with their peers in larger districts. WCA students can gain up to 24 credits toward their degree.

- **Regular Attender Rates**

- Career Technical Education programs like the WCA improve attendance because students are engaged in their learning and invested in the career outcomes it can lead them towards.

- **Well-Rounded Education Opportunities**

- The average high school offers 3.1 Programs of Study. The WCA allows rural and underserved communities access to 6 highly technical programs that lead to certification, licensure, and accelerated learning opportunities via pre-apprentice pathways, college articulated classes, and Advanced Placement courses. These pathways lead to high-wage, high-demand jobs within the industries of our region and across the state. In addition to high academic standards, WCA students engage in career-connected learning experiences with industry and workforce partners.

The funding requested from the Statewide Education Initiatives Account will change lives and communities through investing in students' success. This investment pays dividends through creating a robust, technically-skilled, and stable workforce for Oregon's industries. Funding Willamette Career Academy is consistent with the goal of the Statewide Education Initiatives Account to pave the way for students' success and a stronger Oregon.

Testimony from Students of Willamette Career Academy

Abel Anaya, Senior at Gervais High School

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the committee,

My name is Abel Anaya and I'm a senior at Gervais High School as well as a part of the Health Services program at Willamette Career Academy (WCA). WCA has been such an extraordinary opportunity that I've been lucky to be a part of. My whole life, I've known I've wanted to help people, just not what career I would want to pursue. Then I heard about this program and thought, "maybe this could be my calling", and I couldn't be more right. Gervais is a great school, but WCA has given me more opportunities to continue my education and pursue my career in health services. For example, I was able to job shadow at Legacy Hospital in Silverton, where I saw actual surgeries, assisted nurses with patient care, and experienced firsthand what it's like to pursue a career in medicine. All the classes at WCA are college level, and those classes have given me the edge to prepare me one step closer to my goals and preparing me to be college and career ready. All of the things I've mentioned are amazing, but don't hold a candle to the amazing people I've met in my time there. The staff couldn't be any better. Each and every single one of them are invested in the students, they actually care about your well being, and want to make sure you are successful at all times. All the students that attend WCA are outstanding individuals and it's been my pleasure to learn about so many people, their career paths in the medical field, as well as the many industry opportunities that WCA offers. Thank you for your time.

Dylan Wagoner, Junior at Cascade High School

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the Committee,

My name is Dylan Wagoner and I'm a Junior at Cascade High School and also enrolled in the Computer Science/IT program at Willamette Career Academy. Since joining WCA it has expanded my knowledge of the IT world and given me materials that I would have never had access to otherwise. Coming from a low income household, I thought I would never have the financial resources or learning opportunities needed to attend an Information Technology program but WCA has opened more doors than I thought possible. When covid hit during freshman year, I struggled a lot with online learning and the pressure of what I want to do in the future. My GPA tanked and I had to go to an opportunity center where I needed to make up 2 years worth of credits in 1 year. During this time I heard about Willamette Career Academy from a WCA staff member doing presentations at schools. After a lot of thought I realized I wanted to go into the tech field and Willamette Career Academy had just created a Computer Science/IT

Program that I applied to and it has been one of the best choices I've ever made. Since the beginning of the year I have learned so much about different fields in the Tech world. It has given me a better opportunity to look at what specific field I want to join and the materials and education to do so; I want to be an IT field technician and this program has given me a headstart in my career field of choice.

Jazerei Lei Pajela, Junior at Woodburn High School

Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Hudson and Wright, and members of the Committee,

My name is Jazerei Lei Pajela. I'm a junior at Woodburn High School and I'm currently enrolled in the Manufacturing Program at Willamette Career Academy. When first applying at WCA I was given the chance to explore my interests in all of the programs, my first choice being the Health Services program because I wanted to go into biomedical engineering. My second option was the Manufacturing program because it was still related to careers in the engineering field. At first I was disappointed to not be in Health Services, but as I was exploring the Manufacturing program I realized that it still offered me all the materials and tools needed to still fulfill what I wanted to do in my future.

To me WCA is more than just a school, as the environment is vastly different than you would find at any regular school. For me, before attending WCA I was struggling a lot with the monotony of school. Every single day the same routine, and I was struggling to find a purpose in a lot of what I was doing. I started to question what I wanted to do in my life, because of the daily monotony. I asked myself if there was any way that I could expand on what I wanted to do based upon my interests. One day I heard about WCA and I thought that I could really see myself there. Now that I'm at WCA I'm always moving around, and that's not just busy work! In the manufacturing program every single bit of what I'm learning is pertinent to my future, and I feel a closer connection with all the content and hands-on experiences.

It's not just the content that I feel closer with, it's also with the staff and my peers as well. The staff at WCA do a wonderful job at making the program feel as welcoming as possible, and it's wonderful to be around classmates who all have the same interests. Being in such a positive environment has really made for an amazing place to learn, and I find myself wanting to do better because I know it will help me. When I go to school everyday, I have something to look forward to, and that's all I could ever ask for. Being given the opportunity to show up there everyday is a privilege, and I know that I'm lucky to have the resources that WCA has to offer. I'm proud of what WCA is, and I'm proud of my program. For me it's offered the experience of being in a working environment while still providing me with the tools that I need to excel in a career. I know that one day when I look back on this, I will only remember a unique and life-changing experience that I am happy to have had.

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
House Committee on Education
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

As school leaders representing a partnership with the Willamette Career Academy (WCA), we ask that the Oregon Legislature make a commitment of \$2,850,000 to the WCA for the 2023-25 biennium. We believe in a thriving Oregon through the success of our students, and we believe in supporting WCA through HB 3236.

The success of HB 3236 is more than continuing funding to the Willamette Career Academy – it's continuing the state's commitment to improving access and opportunities for students in historically underserved communities and investing in the success of Oregon students. As school leaders, we are committed to representing the needs and interests of our students. We value the work of the WCA and we value the state's investment in our students.

Serving Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties, the WCA is the first regional Career Technical Education program of its size in Oregon. The WCA provided six different career educational programs for 250 students in the 2022-23 school year, a student base where nearly 57% of students were students of color and 53% of students were female. The WCA exceeds even the high expectations of Career Technical Education programs, with 97.6% of their students graduating on time in the first year. Since its first year, the WCA has doubled its programs and increased its partnerships with business and industry.

United in public and private support, the WCA has the active involvement of local industry partners, such as Knife River, Papé Machinery, Freres Lumber, Salem Health, and MaPS Credit Union. The inclusion of industry partners allows WCA students to engage in a sustainable school-to-career pathway – connecting businesses with skilled employees and teaching students the skills needed for high-paying, in-demand local jobs. This ongoing influx of highly skilled workers into our region will make our local counties more attractive to business and industry investments.

In order for this student success and dynamic growth to continue, the WCA needs support. The funding of HB 3236 will be allocated to the WCA's operating costs, work-based learning, internships, apprenticeship opportunities, and access to high-quality educators who teach our students. As it grows, the WCA will be able to support over 450 students at its full capacity.

We believe in the Willamette Career Academy and the positive impact it has had on our students. We respectfully ask you to support HB 3236.

Sincerely,

Darin Drill, Superintendent | Cascade SD
Cory Ellis, Superintendent | Falls City SD
Dandy Stevens, Superintendent | Gervais SD
Brad Capener, Superintendent | Jefferson SD
Rachel Stucky, Superintendent | Mt. Angel SD
Dr. Stephen Philips, Superintendent | Newberg SD
Ginger Redlinger, Superintendent | North Marion SD
Lee Loving, Superintendent | North Santiam SD

Joseph M. Wehrli, Superintendent | St. Paul SD
Scott Drue, Superintendent | Silver Falls SD
Dr. Joe Morelock, Superintendent | Woodburn SD
Dr. Dave Novotney, Superintendent | Willamette ESD
Michael Beck, Deputy Superintendent | Willamette ESD
Gretchen Brunner, Executive Director | Willamette ESD
Johnie Ferro, Principal | Willamette Career Academy

March 1, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
House Committee on Education

Delivered electronically via OLIS

Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

I'm writing today in support of House Bill 3236 because it would make meaningful investments in our future workforce.

HB 3236 would allow expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow continued exposure of students to health care careers.

Salem Health partners with Willamette Career Academy's basic nursing skills program, co-employing their nursing instructor and participating in the ongoing development and review of the program's curriculum. In the fall of 2022, 29 second-year students in the program participated in a pilot project to provide students a chance to observe a variety of health care careers. Over 12 weeks, students had opportunities to shadow our staff in multiple units, including the ICU, emergency department, respiratory therapy, imaging, and volunteer services. Salem Health staff representing our community health education, patient advocates/medical ethics, infection prevention, and diabetes education presented on their areas of focus.

As health care professionals in an industry that is currently understaffed, we were encouraged to find students who were engaged and interested in learning more about the wide variety of careers that are open to them. We hope to continue this program next fall and look forward to some of these students joining the Salem Health family.

At Salem Health, our workforce is at the center of everything we do to care for the communities we serve. HB 3236 will help us build a future workforce that can continue our legacy of care. I urge your support for this important bill.

Sincerely,



Leilani R. Slama
Chief Communications and Community Relations Officer



March 16, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

We're writing today in support of House Bill 3236 because it would make meaningful investments in our future workforce and strengthen our communities.

HB 3236 would allow expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow local students to have continued access to valuable diesel technology education and careers.

Papé is an integral part of the communities in which it operates. As a fourth-generation family-owned company, we're committed to supporting local students, investing in the next generation of industry and community leaders. We see the positive impact of career and technical education and work-based learning experiences and joined the swell of support for the Willamette Career Academy as it defines the direction for growth in education and directly contributes to our communities.

The diesel technology program at the Willamette Career Academy prepares students to transition from high school to full-time jobs in the heavy equipment industry or to opportunities where they can further their education and training. As an employer with more than 140 locations throughout the American West, we've experienced our share of the fluctuations in the workforce in the last decade. We see where career and technical education in our high school leads to a stronger, more skilled workforce with clear career focus. We're excited to see the generations of students rise from the foundation they earned at WCA and join our ranks, especially as the WCA reduces barriers that have prevented historically underrepresented populations from accessing and thriving in the heavy equipment industry. We're looking forward to a brighter future where all students who are interested in diesel technology and heavy equipment have the chance to learn in supportive environments and our communities have a stronger, more skilled workforce ready to continue our work.

At Papé, supporting our members' communities has always been paramount to the core of our organization. Join us in supporting stronger communities and a brighter tomorrow through investing in the Willamette Career Academy. We urge you to vote yes on HB 3236.

Sincerely,

Mike Miller
Vice President of Product Support | Papé Machinery, Inc.

Lucas Clark
Brand Marketing Manager | Papé Machinery Agriculture & Turf and Construction & Forestry

March 16, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

We're writing today in support of House Bill 3236 because it would make meaningful investments in our future workforce and strengthen our communities.

HB 3236 would allow expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow local students to have continued access to valuable manufacturing education and careers.

At Freres, we've been rooted in our community for over 100 years, pursuing excellence and providing jobs to over 400 Oregonians throughout the North Santiam Canyon. We value innovation and finding a better way has been our way for a long time. We see the impact of career and technical education and work-based learning experiences and joined the swell of support for the Willamette Career Academy as it defines the direction for growth in education and directly contributes to our communities.

The manufacturing program at the Willamette Career Academy prepares students to walk from high school straight into full-time jobs in the manufacturing industry. As an employer who has been impacted by the fluctuations in the workforce in the last few years, we see where career and technical education in our high school leads to a stronger, more skilled workforce with clear career focus.

Furthermore, as an anchor in the North Santiam Canyon, we support the WCA because the WCA supports the bright futures of our students. In smaller districts like the North Santiam School District, our students don't always have access to the same program opportunities that larger school districts can afford. The WCA reduces these barriers and academic disparities by leveling the playing field and giving our students access to work-based education experiences.

At Freres, our passion for innovation and our care for our community drive everything we do. Join us in supporting stronger communities and a brighter tomorrow through investing in the Willamette Career Academy. We urge you to vote yes on HB 3236.

Sincerely,

Diane Freres, Tyler & Deana Freres, and Kyle & Trisha Freres
Freres Foundation, Freres Engineered Wood, Freres Timber, and Evergreen BioPower LLC

March 16, 2023



The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

I'm writing today in support of House Bill 3236 because investing in our students' career and technical education pays dividends in the strength of our workforce and community.

HB 3236 would allow expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow continued exposure of students to in-demand, local, and high-paying industries including cosmetology, diesel technology, health services, IT/ computer science, construction technology, and manufacturing.

The Willamette Career Academy harnesses the power of connection and collaboration and acts as a regional hub for career and technical innovation through the support of the Willamette ESD and school districts throughout Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties. Mountain West Investment Corporation was an early investor in the promise of the WCA because the mission of the WCA matches with our philosophy of giving back in ways that address the real needs of our community. We champion education and believe in the power of work-based education experiences.

At Mountain West Investment Corporation, we specialize in building our communities and developing brighter futures. As a representative of MWIC, I'm proud to lend our support to the Willamette Career Academy. I've spent a lifetime championing education and leading the state's education initiatives through a variety of roles – investing in the WCA is an extension of this work.

I'm excited to watch the generations of WCA students continue to grow and strengthen our communities through their passion for their industries, commitment to continued improvement, and the solid foundation that they earned through their work at Willamette Career Academy. Please partner with us in empowering students to uncover their best possible future for the good of our students and the good of our state. I urge your support for this important bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Salam A. Noor
Mountain West Investment Corporation—Philanthropy

201 Ferry Street SE, Ste. 400
Salem, Oregon 97301

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www.mwinv.com



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The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

I am in support of House Bill 3236 because it would make meaningful investments in our future workforce and strengthen our communities.

HB 3236 would allow the expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow local students to have continued access to valuable diesel, construction, and manufacturing technology education and careers.

The Asphalt Pavement Association of Oregon, Inc. (APAO) is dedicated to promoting excellence in all aspects of road and highway construction. Our world is changing quickly and those changes necessitate ensuring that the kids coming out of high school are ready to work and innovate to design and build transportation infrastructure that is ready to meet the needs of the next generation of vehicles. The work cannot be outsourced - Oregon roads must be designed and built by Oregonians. The result is that there are fantastic opportunities and wages at all levels and in a variety of areas (from the laboratory to the field to the office), but we need kids who are ready.

We see the power of work-based education in the Willamette Career Academy where students gain skills and knowledge that they will actually use in their careers. I regularly speak at high schools and colleges, and I have seen first-hand that the kids who see the connection between what they are learning in class and how it applies in the real world, are more engaged and positive. Those students are better positioned for success after high school because they already have skills that matter in the real world and have more belief in themselves. APAO is proud to support students learning real-life career skills through work-based education at the Willamette Career Academy.

Help these students pave the way for a better future. I urge you to vote yes on House Bill 3236.

Sincerely,

John Hickey
Executive Director
The Asphalt Pavement Association of Oregon, Inc.

March 16, 2023

The Honorable Courtney Neron, Chair
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Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

I'm writing today in support of House Bill 3236 because Oregon students deserve and need a well-rounded education that is career-focused and individualized to their goals. If the pandemic has taught me anything, it's that schools should look and feel different than the traditional model.

HB 3236 would allow the expenditure of Statewide Education Initiatives Account funds for regional and technical education programs. Specifically, the bill allocates significant funding for the Willamette Career Academy that would allow continued exposure of students to in-demand, local, and high-paying industries, including healthcare, computer science/information technology, manufacturing, construction trades, cosmetology, and diesel technology.

The Willamette Career Academy harnesses the power of connection and collaboration and serves as a regional hub for career and technical innovation by supporting the Willamette ESD and school districts throughout Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties. As the principal of the WCA, I watched the WCA move from concept to reality through the robust participation and enthusiasm of our students and industry partners.

The impact of programs, career-connected learning, and work-based experiences on our students is profound. Destynie Morrison, a Senior at Woodburn High School and second year WCA student, shared this:

"In 2016, my mom passed away, and my dad was really sick. I kept doing my best at school, but nothing made me feel like I was doing a good job. When I was in the eighth grade, my dad passed away too, and I wanted to drop out of school because I saw no point in doing something if they weren't around. But then I looked at my little sister and decided to keep on going for her, to show her that if I can do it, she can too. Thanks to hard work and WCA, I am now on track to be a first-generation high school graduate and a first-generation college student.

Every day at WCA, I feel like I am part of a new family. I love how we are all so close and treated not only as individuals but as a team! There is so much support here for everyone, whether it's academically or emotionally, there is always someone there to help you!!

WCA has helped prepare me for my future in so many ways. By the end of this year, I will be able to sit for licensing boards to earn my license in Hair Design. I plan to work as a hairstylist while I continue my education at Western Oregon University this fall.

Without WCA, I don't know where I would be. The team at WCA is amazing. They make this more than a school, it is also a family. Thank you so much to all the donors, supporters, teachers, and administrators who make this place a home where students can truly discover their best selves."

I'm excited to watch these generations of students continue to grow and strengthen our communities through their passion for their industries, commitment to continuous improvement, and the solid foundation they earned through their work at Willamette Career Academy. Please partner with us in empowering students to uncover their best possible future for the good of our students and the good of our state. I urge your support for this critical bill.

Sincerely,

Johnie Ferro
Principal of Willamette Career Academy

March 16, 2023



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Delivered electronically via OLIS

Chair Neron, Members of the Committee:

As the superintendent of Gervais School District, I see the partnership between my district and the Willamette Career Academy as directly within my district's mission of our growing diverse community by sowing the seeds of opportunities to raise prepared, resilient students. By joining with 11 other school districts and industry partners, our students have the chance to gain hands-on experiences in a variety of career and technical fields. By participating in WCA, we're providing education and career opportunities to our students that they may not have otherwise and we value the equity bolstered by those opportunities. Students who enroll in the program for two years, graduate with initial certifications that allow them to go right to work in their industry or with the prerequisites that easily transition to a trade school, 2-year or 4-year college.

The academic and career preparedness of our students is a cornerstone to the success of our community. We value an educational system that's fluid and tailored to the needs and interests of our students and WCA allows us to provide Career Technical Education to our students without having to build an independent CTE program. We know that often our high school students are important contributors to the family's finances. Experiences in programs at WCA provide opportunities for our students to elevate their family's economic situation by being able to secure higher wage jobs once out of high school.

Beyond the value to the community, I also see the value of the Willamette Career Academy to individual students. I encourage all the students in my district to apply to WCA because I've seen how that participation ties in with their academic success, engagement in school, and excitement for the future. I pay for additional slots because I want every student who wants to participate to do so. This can be difficult for my small district to manage financially, but I won't deny a student who really wants this opportunity to participate in a life-changing program such as this.

"WCA has changed my life in more ways than one," said Natalie Gieselman, a Senior at Gervais High school. "Not only have I learned skills that will help me throughout my whole life, but I have formed some amazing connections along the way. I look forward to attending WCA everyday because they have created such an amazing and welcoming environment, and I know that the content I'm learning will benefit me 10, 20, 30 years into the future. WCA has set me years ahead of my peers by not only helping me earn a national certification, but also giving me connections and experiences that I would not have gotten without WCA."

The last few years have been really challenging for our students as virtual learning and career uncertainty eroded their sense of belonging, motivation, and hopefulness. At Gervais, we're dedicated to creating support for students' mental health and vision for the future and the Willamette Career Academy is a block that we depend on for building our momentum and success. As a superintendent with a bright generation of students, I ask for you to stand by one of the keys to our success and support Willamette Career Academy through House Bill 3236.

Dandy Stevens
Superintendent
Gervais School District