

Submitter: Rodrigo Gonzalez-Juarez

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education

Measure: HB3120

Good afternoon, Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Ruiz and Vice-Chair McIntire and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Rodrigo Gonzalez-Juarez and I am an Academic Counselor/Peer Mentor Coordinator for TRIO Student Support Services at OSU-Cascades.

I am writing to provide testimony supporting HB3120-2, The Higher Education Coordinating Commission shall establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting organizations that expand the scope and community reach of college access and success programs for the purpose of increasing college enrollment and post-secondary completion rates for Oregon's historically underrepresented. This bill also aligns with the recommendations of the Joint Task Force On Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education (JTUSHE).

In the last biennium budget, HB 2412-2 invested \$5 Million to five College Access and Success organizations in the state. The intended purpose of those funds was to increase support services for Oregon's historically underrepresented students and expand the number of students served across the state.

TRIO programs are designed to serve low-income and first-generation students looking to improve their lives through education. Currently, Oregon has 54 Grants serving over 11,000 students from middle school through adult and college-aged students. The programs are federally funded through the Department of Education. The previous state investment in the Oregon TRIO Association expanded these services to new communities and worked with institutions and community organizations to increase the number of grants statewide and serve additional students. As a result, we have added nine (9) new TRIO grants to the state. This outcome generated over \$2 million in additional annual funding from the federal budget, over 1,000 new students served annually, and over 20 new jobs across the State.

This funding has helped students all over the state, but I have it seen it change the lives of many students at my organization. Thanks to scholarship funding from OTA, this year two of my students received the funds needed to complete their degrees. Otherwise, they would have had to stop school for a term and work instead to finish their tuition. There have been several students in terms previously at OSU-Cascades that have benefited from this funding as well. OTA also will fund a professional development opportunity for six OSU-Cascades students, who will benefit greatly from this Student Leadership Conference. Four out of the six students attending are also peer mentors for our TRIO program, who will be better equipped to support incoming and transfer students thanks to this opportunity that OTA has provided. OTA also helped find funding for our program to purchase technology for 6 rental laptops that students can check out from our program. Having someone work in a permanent, full-time position at OTA has alleviated the workload for TRIO professionals all over the state. It has given us access to accurate and timely information that we need to serve our students. This organization has allowed us to have a wider reach and makes a bigger impact in the lives of first-generation, low-income, and students with documented disabilities than what we could do without this organization.

A continued investment in community-based organizations through HB3120-2 will uniquely address the needs of underrepresented students in higher education throughout Oregon. I believe that an investment in the Oregon TRIO Association is a remarkable return on investment that can help maintain the effective management and constant expansion of TRIO programs throughout the state. TRIO is impactful at serving underrepresented students in Oregon; let's work together to increase the number of students who benefit from these services.

I invite you to approve HB 3120-2.

Best,

Rodrigo Gonzalez-Juarez