

Submitter: Summer Highfill
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1066

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee,

For the record, I am Summer Highfill, a teacher & CTE pathway developer at Oregon Charter Academy. Oregon Charter Academy first opened in 2005 as Oregon Connections Academy, but we did the hard work in 2020 to become an independent school now known as Oregon Charter Academy to better educate our students through dynamic and responsive instruction with equitable access for all students enrolled.

I hold a professional teaching license and CTE endorsement in all the Business categories. ORCA believes strongly in dynamic instruction for both students and staff. Because of ORCA's tuition reimbursement, I was able to seek and will be conferred with my MBA in the Spring 2023 from Creighton University. My position in the CTE community has provided the opportunity to understand the employment needs across the State of Oregon and I was selected as the first educator on the Oregon & Tourism Leadership Academy. I have helped inform and build the Oregon Employability Skills curriculum. These opportunities have helped me build my 2 Business pathways at ORCA. We offer Business & Management: Entrepreneurship and we are the first virtual program in the state to build a Hotel Management pathway. Our Business teaching team has created a dynamic, relevant Business x Math series where we have built CTE Business labs in Personal Finance & Entrepreneurship. This series leads to Math 111/112 with college now credit. I have worked as an educator for over 20 years and most recently for the past 6 at ORCA. I have never had the opportunity to use my skill set in a way that informs, creates and provides dynamic, relevant instruction to students prior to my time at ORCA and I value this opportunity. Our HTM pathway has built an opportunity for students of all learning levels to enter this high demand industry in Oregon. We have a 4-part program that includes mini-certifications at each level. This allows all learners from those on modified diplomas to those who are college bound and everyone in between to leave High School with marketable skills that will serve them in future pursuits. Our Entrepreneurship students have immersive learning experiences in the Oregon Employability Skills curriculum, StrengthsFinder, and simulated learning experiences such as our MIMIC Social SIMternship through Stukent. This tool puts students into the role of a Digital Marketing Manager and they are tasked with building social media content for Buhi Bags based on business goals/objectives and customer profiles. Students walk away from this class with the opportunity to become social media certified and they gain a strong, real-life skill set in digital marketing. This is

typically a favorite class for many students, and the feedback from students is phenomenal. Recently, I had a student on an IEP, mention to me that this is the one class she looks forward to working on each day. She owns a leather cleaning company and was inspired by her work in our simulation to understand how the various social media platforms work and has started an Instagram account because she felt knowledgeable on how to use the platform effectively. Our Intro to Hospitality course has had many students asking “this is a career?”. It has been a validating experience to support students in finding future career opportunities with a direct path into Chemeketa that offers their Hospitality & Tourism certificates and degrees in a virtual setting which is a great fit for our students who chose virtual learning in High School. Where other school programs across Oregon struggle to find CTE instructors to build equitable programs, we are a shining example of opportunities with a robust CTE staff across 5 pathways that give students dynamic, relevant learning that is customized to prepare for college or career opportunities. Our team is proud to represent virtual CTE development at ORCA.