

April 20, 2023

Co-Chair Lew Frederick
Co-Chair Susan McLain
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301



RE: Testimony for HB 5205 supporting current SB 762 Oregon Conservation Corps (OCC)

My name is Belinda Brown and I am an enrolled and elected Cultural Representative of the Ajumawi-Atsuge Nation (Pit River Tribe). I am also the Tribal Partnerships Director, Chairwoman of the Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership and Secretary of Lomakatsi Restoration Project Board of Directors.

The current OCC funding, originally established under SB 762 in 2021, has enabled Lomakatsi Restoration Project to fund two 18 week cohorts of youth ages 18-26. Our team operated the first tribal crew out of Chiloquin, Oregon with mostly Klamath Tribal members, beginning in October 2022. These tribal youth have completed the Lomakatsi 18 week, workforce training program cohort and have received certifications in Wildland Firefighting, S212 Chainsaw Certification, Cultural Monitor Certificates, First Aid-CPR and their Incident Command System (ICS), 100, 200, & 700. This workforce-training program enables these young adults to advance to a natural resource career pathway within an agency, tribe, state or local entity. They will also have an opportunity to pursue an entrepreneurial business pathway.

For many of the tribal, underserved and disadvantaged youth of Oregon, the OCC Program is a pathway out of poverty and provides youth a safe, live, outdoor classroom where they can learn in an experiential learning environment and gain valuable skillsets while learning the social soft skills of working in the natural resource career business sector.

For the last 11 years, Lomakatsi has been implementing youth programs and including Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) while also incorporating the 40 ASSETS and Social Development Model, combined with the local Traditional Values of the tribal communities that we serve. The youth gain knowledge and build on best practices in positive youth development while incorporating cultural agility training into their daily work, relationships and activities.


I believe Oregon continues to be on the "cutting edge" of Best Practice Prevention Programs. OCC is one of the better programs that is currently funded, because many students are kinesthetic learners who thrive in outdoor classrooms where they learn by doing. This funding has enhanced our ability to reach more tribal, latino and disadvantaged youth who would not have otherwise had this opportunity.

Besides reducing fuel hazards, protecting habitats and homes, and building the next generation of eco-stewards who are trained, willing and able to assist local communities, Lomakatsi has instilled in their crew leaders and youth crews an understanding of social justice. They continue to learn respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment in which they live.

The OCC funding has reached Oregon youth and communities in a positive way that deems continued support through the current effort of HB 5205. We respectfully urge the Committee to

fully fund the HECC's Policy Option Package 301, which includes \$10 million for the Oregon Conservation Corps and \$2 million dedicated to Tribal Youth Corps funding, to build upon the impressive start and momentum of OCC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Belinda Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Belinda Brown
Tribal Partnerships Director
Lomakatsi Restoration Project