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Dear Oregon Legislators,

My name is Bridget Dazey, and I am the Executive Director of Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP), which is one of the state's nine nonprofit workforce development boards and is an affiliate of the state's public workforce system, WorkSource Oregon. CWP and the state's other workforce boards are responsible for the strategic management of federal and state funds that support education, training, and employment services that meet the needs of the state's major industries, employers, and job seekers. The workforce boards bring key stakeholders from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to the table, and facilitate collaborative approaches to problem-solving the state's most pressing workforce and economic issues.

An additional role of the workforce boards is to advocate for best practices and policies that reduce barriers to education and employment opportunities, especially for our state's most vulnerable communities, including youth and people with disabilities. I am writing to you today to request that you add language to House Bill 3563 to specifically address the needs of differently abled youth and those with disabilities.

As you know, Oregon is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). This commitment is reflected across the State and woven into workforce development programs, which are designed to ensure that all Oregonians can succeed in the workforce. However, differently abled youth and those with disabilities often face significant barriers to employment.

These barriers can include:

- Lack of access to quality education and training
- Lack of affordable and accessible transportation
- Lack of accessible workplaces
- Discrimination and exclusion

These barriers can make it difficult for differently abled youth and those with disabilities to find and keep a job that meets their needs and provides economic stability. As a result, they are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than their peers without disabilities. House Bill 3563 seeks to consolidate programs overseen by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC); however, the bill does not specifically address the needs of differently abled youth and those with disabilities.

I urge you to add language to the bill that would specifically address the needs of differently abled youth and those with disabilities.

By adding this language to the bill, you would be sending a clear message that Oregon is committed to ensuring that all Oregonians, regardless of their abilities, can succeed in the workforce.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,