



Testimony on HB 3563
Senate Committee on Education
May 4, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 3563.

This bill takes the Oregon Youth Corps, Oregon Conservation Corps, and Oregon Youth Employment Program, and creates the Oregon Youth Works Advisory Board to work with HECC staff helping to guide the work and policies of these important youth workforce programs. If adopted this bill has the effect into consolidating the two advisory bodies currently working with these programs to one.

HECC has long managed the Oregon Youth Corps, whose mission is to advance youth workforce and stewardship experiences that strengthen communities across Oregon. This program carries out that mission by employing youth in workforce readiness-oriented, paid stewardship work experiences, and helping to fund organizations connecting youth to service-learning community projects with opportunities to earn academic credit.

The Oregon Conservation Corps was created and funded in 2021 as part of passage of large-scale wildfire mitigation and response measures. This program grants funding to organizations that provide workforce training to young Oregonians completing projects that reduce wildfire risk in communities.

In the same year, the legislature funded the Oregon Youth Employment Program, which awards grants to create employment opportunities in communities that have high rates of youth unemployment.

Both the Oregon Youth Corps and the Oregon Conservation Corps have their own advisory board. The Oregon Youth Employment Program has none.

Though they have differences, these programs are related, all providing opportunities to young Oregonians who are underserved by available summer enrichment, education, and workforce training opportunities. Collapsing the current advisory board structure creates one body solely focused on improving youth workforce opportunity. It will improve the ability of these programs to work more seamlessly, make it more likely we can recruit and maintain a full board, and decreases duplication for HECC staff.

In the House Higher Education Committee, an amendment was made to clarify the membership of the new board, and ensure there is a balance of members that represent industry, wildfire interests, and stakeholder communities. The amendment ensures broad representation from diverse stakeholders on the new advisory body.

This bill creates a dedicated space for community members, educators, and employers to work together on one specific, important area of workforce training and development, and HECC encourages you to support HB 3563.

Thank you for your time today.