

Study Bill: Developing Oregon's Workforce with Youth Apprenticeships

02/04/2024

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Elmer and Sosa, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Cassidy Kotter, and I serve as the Assistant Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech).

I am writing to you today to express Oregon Tech's support for HB 4118.

Oregon is facing immense workforce shortages in countless sectors and industries, including those most relevant to Oregon Tech, ranging from behavioral health to dental health care to semiconductors. At the same time, many states throughout the nation have looked to youth apprenticeship programs to address similar workforce deficits and to simultaneously extend opportunities for high school students to get a head start on their future careers.

HB 4118 would direct the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries to conduct an in-depth study of youth apprenticeship programs and report back on best practices for registered youth apprenticeship programs, different options for program models, and obstacles standing in the way of statewide youth apprenticeship framework deployment. The results of the study would be instrumental to an interim legislative workgroup developing a data-driven proposal for the 2025 session.

Oregon Tech supports this study because a statewide registered youth apprenticeship framework would address rampant workforce shortages, provide students with an income while in school, and provide them with the chance to get a firsthand look into a field of their interest, thereby ultimately encouraging them to further explore said interests in higher education before successfully progressing to the workforce upon graduation. Oregon Tech's significant body of dual credit enrolled high school students could also specifically see benefit to a youth apprenticeship framework, as they acquire real-world workforce experience, earn while learning, and simultaneously benefit from our institution's internal supports and resources that will assist in helping them seamlessly transition from high school to higher education to the workforce.

The Oregon Institute of Technology urges your support of this bill.

Thank you,

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