

February 7, 2024

House Committee on Higher Education

900 Court St. NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 4163

Committee Chair Lively, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

My name is Christopher Mahan, and I am here writing to you today, not as the president of the Oregon TRIO Association (OTA), but as a first generation, low income student that benefited greatly from the various TRIO programs firsthand. I am currently employed at the Clatsop Community College TRIO Talent Search program working directly with middle and high school students in helping them explore career pathways and opportunities that are not often accessible, or known to them. It should be known that I have been involved in the TRIO community for over 10 years in various roles and programs serving continuous support that is important to their success.

Expanding the scope and reach of college access by making TRIO programs such as ours more widely available to first generation, low income students and students with disabilities, are able to access the resources and support they need to succeed in higher education. This could lead to higher graduation rates, better job prospects, a more educated workforce, and thereby add more jobs to the community. All of these things are what makes for a healthy and vibrant place to live.

In the latest investment two years ago from HB 5006 and HB 2412, we were able to increase our reach throughout the state by adding nine additional programs, adding 3 million dollars in federal funding, supporting several hundred more students in free services, and adding value to the community with new jobs. In our Last Mile Scholarship, we were able to provide crucial support in completing their remaining requirements for a bachelor's degree who were out of student aid and were considering dropping out from college. We were successful in providing additional access and freedoms to students who weren't able to access study abroad opportunities.

Overall, continued funding for OTA will allow additional federal dollars to come into the state while providing free services to new underrepresented students in rural and metropolitan areas that are greatly needed. I have no doubt that as a TRIO alumnus, and for over 60 years, these programs do work. It's what we do, in that we have adapted to wars, depressions, recessions, budget cuts, and more recently a global pandemic. However, we also remain firm in our resolve and commitment to our students. Therefore,

I humbly ask that you approve HB 4163 so that we may grow and lead the nation in access and opportunity when it comes to our students' education. If you are unsure of what TRIO is or its history, I encourage you to visit one of our 55 TRIO federal programs throughout the state to see firsthand why this is an investment, and not just a giveaway. Someone in Oregon is depending on you for this vote whether that be a parent, a student, an educator, and even a future voter. Please be that someone that says, "YES!"

HB 4163: Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting organizations to expand the scope and community reach of college access and success programs.

Respectfully,

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

Christopher Mahan

Oregon TRIO President

TRIO Talent Search College/Career Advisor

TRIO Student Support Services and McNair Alumnus