



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

February 19, 2025

To: Chair [Sen. Lew Frederick](#), and Vice Chair [Sen. Suzanne Weber](#)  
and Members of the [Senate Committee on Education](#)

Re: [SB 604](#) – Establishes the Strong Start Program – **Support**

SB604 would continue providing funding for the Strong Start Program within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for purposes of providing support to first-year and underrepresented students at public universities in this state. This is consistent with the League of Women Voters of Oregon position: **Through sustaining equitable access and a seamless path from preK to postsecondary education, more Oregon students will prosper.**

Underrepresented students include those who are eligible for federal Pell Grants, as well as rural and BIPOC students.

The program was begun in 2021, and according to the Higher Education Coordinating Council, participating **students (have) had higher retention rates, stronger GPAs, and completed more credit hours compared to their non-participating counterparts. Moreover, the program's focus on serving BIPOC students and students from underserved communities highlights the commitment to addressing equity in higher education.**

The League applauds this initiative, and would like to see it continue.

We urge your support for SB 604.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Bentson".

Lisa Bentson  
President LWVOR

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean W. Pierce".

Jean Pierce  
Social Policy Coordinator