

Submitter: Brad Capener

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3552

Dear Committee Members,

The Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD) is currently in the process of creating a regional career center for Southern Oregon. Working in partnership with industry, higher education, and our community, we understand the challenges involved in recruitment and retention. While multiple industries in Oregon are struggling to hire, it is our Health Care industry that is experiencing significant staffing shortages and the projections for the coming years only makes it worse. We are developing part of the solution in our area by focusing on high need positions like Medical Assistants, Phlebotomists, and Emergency Medical Technicians. We are also creating the second Behavioral Health Program in the United States, and we plan to develop a Dental Assisting Program. All of these areas are struggling greatly in our region.

Students will spend two years in programs that give them internship and job shadowing experiences. They learn professionalism and workforce skills. They have mentors and learn how to interview. Seniors graduate with a certificate (or eligible to test for the certificate) that allows them to enter the workforce immediately upon graduation. They can then seek higher credentials at our community college to further their career objectives. This program will help students in rural areas who do not currently have these opportunities. This will help lift students out of a life of poverty by giving them access to a high wage, in-demand career. In short, programs like these and the one we are creating will transform lives and help our struggling industries. Oregon spends roughly 350\$ per student while our neighbors in Washington spend over \$4000. We need to help our workforce by building pipelines, or pathways for young people. We need to reach out to young people and give them hope; engage them and support them.

The challenge with setting up regional career centers, is that they are expensive to create. We need to find a location and renovate it with classrooms and labs. We need equipment and staffing. Participating school districts will contribute monies per pupil, but district contributions are not enough to establish a center. We are dependent on private donors who understand the challenges and want to give to support a solution. Not having dedicated funding ultimately means that some parts of Oregon will not be able to afford to create these pathways and solutions in their community. While we have some support for purchasing a location, we do not have enough to make our vision a reality. Furthermore, we desire to build satellite locations since we cover three rural counties. We are beginning in Jackson County now, but our design is to be able to expand our reach to more rural areas. Having the support for this bill will

ensure that we successfully build a thriving regional career center. It will mean that we can expand our programming and purchase the needed equipment. It will mean that we can begin to discuss and plan how we extend our reach to our entire region. We believe the time is right to invest in our young people across the state and be part of the solution to the growing and imminent workforce challenges in this state. Passing this will transform many lives and serve as a lifeline for both industry and students across Oregon. Thank you for your consideration.