

Submitter: Matt Bisek

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce
Development

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: HB2997

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee,

My name is Matt Bisek, and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon TRIO Association. I am writing in strong support of HB 2997, which will establish a designated grant fund within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to equitably distribute funding to community-based organizations that expand college access and success for historically underrepresented students.

On behalf of the nearly 12,000 TRIO students across Oregon, I urge you to support HB 2997 to ensure that low-income, first-generation, and underserved students continue to receive the resources and support they need to thrive in higher education.

For years, TRIO and similar programs have helped students navigate financial aid, academic support, and career readiness, yet these efforts have been funded inconsistently through one-time legislative appropriations (HB 5006 and HB 2412). HB 2997 seeks to correct this by creating a stable, dedicated grant fund, ensuring sustainable and equitable support for organizations serving Oregon's most vulnerable students.

HB 2997 Will Directly Support Students By:

- Establishing a permanent grant fund to eliminate the uncertainty of year-to-year budget negotiations and ensure long-term investment in college access programs.
- Expanding resources for organizations that help students persist and graduate, strengthening Oregon's workforce and economic future.
- Prioritizing funding for students most at risk of not completing college, including those from rural areas, low-income backgrounds, and communities of color.

I have seen firsthand the transformative impact that TRIO and similar college access programs have on students, but many of these essential services are at risk without consistent funding. Many TRIO students work multiple jobs while juggling full course loads. They are committed to earning their degrees, yet financial and academic barriers continue to stand in their way.

I urge the committee to support HB 2997 to ensure equitable, sustainable funding for programs that change lives and open doors to higher education. Thank you for your time and for prioritizing student success.

Sincerely,

Matt Bisek
Executive Director
Oregon TRIO Association