



**Office of Representative Ricki Ruiz
House District 50
HB2686**

Introduction & Purpose of the Bill

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development, For the record, my name is Ricki Ruiz, and I have the honor of representing the hard-working families and residents of House District 50, also known as Toddler City, which encompasses Gresham and a tiny portion of Outer East Portland. I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 2686. This bill is a crucial investment in Oregon's workforce and economic future by supporting the re-enrollment of Oregonians who have some college education but no credentials.

The Need for HB 2686

Oregon has over **810,000 residents** who started college or workforce training but never finished—a number that is disproportionately high compared to other states of our size. Each year, **9,200+ students stop out**, and approximately **\$90 million in state appropriations** are spent on students who ultimately leave before completing their education. These numbers highlight a critical gap in our education system—one that we cannot ignore if we are serious about building a strong and competitive workforce. Compounding this issue, Oregon faces both an **enrollment cliff and a widening skills gap**. The number of available workers for every 100 jobs is shrinking, and our **college-going rate has dropped by nearly 10% over the past decade**. We cannot rely solely on graduating high school seniors to fill these gaps—we need a statewide strategy to re-engage adult learners.

How HB 2686 Solves This Problem

This bill provides funding for a **statewide, data-driven strategy** to bring these students back. Through data analytics, targeted outreach, multichannel marketing, live professional coaching, and a streamlined re-enrollment platform, we can remove barriers for Oregonians who want to complete their education but don't know where to start. States that have implemented similar programs have seen significant success. In New Jersey, for example, a similar initiative led to over **5,300 re-enrollments in just the first year**, generating **\$18.5 million in institutional revenue** and **\$43.3 million in economic contributions** from graduates. Oregon stands to benefit greatly from this model.

Economic & Workforce Benefits

Investing in re-enrollment is one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to **grow Oregon's workforce pipeline**. Right now, **over 18,000 Oregon residents are enrolled in online degree programs in other states**, resulting in **\$180 million in tuition dollars leaving Oregon**. By implementing a statewide re-enrollment strategy, we can keep those tuition dollars here, strengthen our public higher education institutions, and ensure that employers have access to the skilled workforce they need. HB 2686 is a **win for students, a win for employers, and a win for Oregon's economy**. This is a smart investment that will pay dividends for years to come by increasing economic mobility for thousands of Oregonians while addressing our state's workforce challenges.