



**Office of Representative Ricki Ruiz
House District 50
HB2997**

Personal Connection & First-Generation Experience

This is a policy that I deeply believe in—not only because of the impact it will have on students across our state, but also because it reflects my own story. As the first in my family to graduate, I know firsthand how life-changing it is to have someone in your corner—mentoring, advising, and guiding you through decisions that shape your future. I also saw how a lack of a mentor, advisor, or support allows students to fall through the cracks.

The support I received helped me reach goals and places I never thought possible. It ultimately led me to public service, where I now have the privilege of advocating for students facing the same barriers I once did. I know that thousands of students across our state, especially in East Multnomah County, are waiting for that same support—guidance that can make the difference between struggling to navigate higher education alone and having the tools to succeed.

Why This Investment Matters for Oregon

College access and success programs, like TRIO, AVID, and College Possible, have a proven track record of helping students—especially those from low-income, immigrant, and first-generation backgrounds—navigate financial aid, prepare for college entrance exams, and explore career pathways. Expanding these programs ensures that students, whether in urban centers like Gresham or rural communities across Oregon, have the resources and mentorship they need to achieve their educational and career goals.

Economic Impact & Workforce Development

Investing in post-secondary success is also an investment in Oregon's economy. Our state is rapidly growing in industries like tech, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing—all of which require a highly skilled and educated workforce. Colleagues, we must ensure students have the support to succeed in higher education, we risk leaving too many young Oregonians behind and weakening our future workforce.

Impact on East Multnomah County & Rural Communities

In my district, and across East Multnomah County, families face significant financial barriers to higher education. Many students are working to support their families while trying to pursue a degree. The need for college access and success programs is particularly urgent in communities of color, immigrant communities, and rural areas, where systemic barriers have historically limited access to higher education. This bill ensures that organizations working directly in these communities—who understand the challenges students face—have the resources to provide culturally competent, high-impact support.