

Submitter: Lily Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2997

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lily Smith, and I am writing to express my strong support for HB 2997. As a proud TRIO alumna and a current TRIO professional, I know firsthand the life-changing impact that programs like TRIO have on first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students across Oregon.

I was the first in my family to attend college, and while I was excited about the opportunity, I faced significant challenges navigating higher education. The TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program at the University of Oregon became my anchor. It provided me with academic guidance, financial literacy, and a supportive community that empowered me to persist through the barriers that often prevent first-generation students from completing their degrees. Without TRIO, I would not have had the tools or confidence to earn my bachelor's degree or pursue further education.

The impact of TRIO on my life was so profound that after completing graduate school, I chose to dedicate my career to supporting other students with similar backgrounds. I began working for a TRIO Talent Search program at the University of Washington, where I supported over 300 middle and high school students as they explored college and career pathways. Now, I proudly serve as the Workforce Readiness Manager for the Oregon TRIO Association, where I continue to champion the success of underrepresented students by organizing college and employment site visits, facilitating workshops, and connecting students to vital resources.

HB 2997 represents a critical investment in the future of Oregon's students. It builds upon the foundation laid by HB 5006 and HB 2412 by continuing to provide essential funding to community-based organizations like the Oregon TRIO Association. This funding allows us to deliver high-impact services that remove barriers to higher education and ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.

I urge you to support HB 2997 and recognize the transformative power of community-based programs. By investing in TRIO and similar initiatives, you are investing in the future leaders of our state. I am living proof that when we support first-generation and underrepresented students, we change lives, strengthen communities, and create a brighter future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lily Smith