

Submitter: Mark Henkels
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

Senator Frederick, Senator Weber, and other Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Mark Henkels. I was a professor at Western Oregon University for 35 years, having retired in 2023. Although I could be doing many other things right now, I am taking this time to state that SB 604 and the Strong Start Program deserve your strong support.

Oregon's higher education system benefits from having multiple on-ramps and mechanisms that support intelligent and hard-working students who need the opportunity to overcome weaknesses in their K-12 education. This is especially true of the COVID generation of students now entering college. Western Oregon's Strong Start program has successfully enabled many first generation student and those from non-English speaking homes to complete their undergraduate degrees. These students then moved into promising careers and graduate schools. The amount of money the state spends on this program is minuscule compared to other elements in the HECC budget. It is a worthy investment, deserving of your support.

I personally have seen the transformation of numerous Western Oregon University students from being statistically unlikely prospects for academic success into true academic success stories. They now contribute to Oregon's prosperity through their academic and professional skills and experience. The Strong Start program is an effective tool for building an equitable and effective public higher education system.

Thank you for your attention.
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