

Southern OREGON UNIVERSITY

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

TESTIMONY OFFERED IN RELATIONSHIP TO HB 3669

Offered by Marc Overbeck, Director of Government Relations

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and Members of the Committee:

Southern Oregon University is committed to the expansion and development of Oregon's workforces, particularly in our region, but also for all of Oregon. As one of Oregon's public universities, we take seriously our role as one of the greatest engines for training and educating the future workforce in our state.

Programs like Prosperity 10,000 are absolutely essential for helping train Oregon's workforce to meet immediate and short-term needs, and hopefully help people access career ladders that lead to more economic opportunity.

We would like to note, as a follow-up to a comment that "everyone is at the table" when it comes to local workforce boards at the public hearing on HB 3669, that none of Oregon's seven public universities currently have "a seat at the table" directly when it comes to our nine local workforce boards.

In some areas of the state, such as in southern Oregon, local boards have created separate forums for educational partners to meet together, and there are positive results that come from such conversations. However, this is not the same as being at the table with business and community based organizations when short and long-term workforce trends are being discussed and priorities set.

At a time when it is being declared that "Oregon has lost momentum" on economic and workforce issues, we believe it's important that post-secondary institutions with the size and scope of a public university play a more active role in helping develop regional strategies to address local workforce needs not only for the short-term, but for the long term as well. Our public universities, including

SOU, offer a growing number of badges, certificates, microcredentials—that offer demonstrations of learning and skill acquisition that don't take four or six years to produce.

Later this month, you will likely see a proposal to require local workforce boards to include at least one public university as a part of their membership. This may not be the perfect solution for how to bring all parties together around the supply and demand for workers, but it is a conversation starter within the legislative process.

Thank you for your consideration, and your support for regional partnerships that maximize the contribution of all who can help.