

Submitter: Victor Cummings
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB977
TO: Senate Education Committee Public Hearing
RE: SB 977

My name is Victor Cummings, and I am providing testimony in support of SB 977. Prior to retiring in June 2024, I served as Academic Coordinator for the Career and Community Studies (CCS) program at Portland State University. In this role I was responsible for developing and implementing the Modified Syllabus (individualized learning plans) for all 15 CCS students throughout the 2023-2024 academic year. I collaborated closely with University professors, CCS students and team, and with Graduate students from the PSU Secondary Dual Inclusion Program who serve as Academic Coaches for CCS Students. Before joining the small CCS team, I worked in for 29 years with Portland Public Schools Special Education Transition program, and was involved in the original "visioning" and development of the CCS program at PSU (which originally started with the support of 5-year "Think College" grant funding.).

So having worked for decades supporting young adults with disabilities with accessing vocational training and paid employment, community living skills, and accessing adult learning opportunities, I have always understood the importance of a program like CCS which provide essential supports for students who have significant learning challenges to be able to successfully participate in post-secondary education. Over the years I referred many of my 18-21 year old PPS Special Education Transition students to the CCS program at PSU, where they were able to meaningfully pursue interests in academics, career-related learning, and a wide range of "campus life" activities.

The growth I have observed in CCS student skills, independence, confidence, and competence has been nothing short of extraordinary, and it was a highlight of my Special Education career to serve as Academic Coordinator for my final year of work. With some strategic and individualized support, CCS students rise to meet the challenges of college-level studies again and again, and then take this foundation of success into their adult lives and future employment.

Not only do the students themselves benefit from the CCS program, but their participation and inclusion in higher education greatly benefits ALL college students and Professors who have an opportunity to get to know and see strengths of a wider range of student abilities. This greater awareness has untold future benefits as the experience of successful inclusion can literally change cultural understandings of

what is possible. So I've always enjoyed sharing with students and everyone that we collaborate with that we are "pioneering possibilities" and changing the world as we go, and it is exciting to see new doors to adulthood continuing to open.

As the only program of its kind in Oregon, the CCS program must continue to develop and implement its mission--and critically needs sustainable funding in order to do so. Please consider SB 997 in light of not just immediate program needs, but also the larger mission of taking this important work to the "next level" benefitting lives both present and future. Thank you for listening, and I'm happy to provide any additional support or testimony that might be helpful.

Victor Cummings, M.S./Ed.
CCS Academic Coordinator, 2023-2024
Special Education Transition Specialist (Retired)