



Chair Hudson and Members of the House Committee on Higher Education,

We appreciate your efforts to expand career and technical education (CTE) opportunities through HB 3552. Ensuring students have access to regionally appropriate career pathways is vital for workforce development and economic growth in Oregon. However, after reviewing the bill, we have several concerns regarding its implementation, particularly regarding the role of community colleges and the potential impact on regional coordination.

First, while HB 3552 requires consultation with community colleges in developing funding plans, it does not appear to allocate direct funding or formal decision-making authority to them. Given that community colleges play a significant role in CTE education, workforce training, and credentialing, their limited involvement in funding decisions raises concerns about how effectively these centers will align with existing postsecondary pathways. Without direct funding or a clearly defined role, community colleges may struggle to contribute meaningfully to the planning and operation of these regional career centers. We urge consideration of an amendment that ensures community colleges have both financial support and a structured role in governance.

Second, we have heard discussions regarding regional coordinators potentially being moved under the management of education service districts (ESDs), particularly where they are not already housed. Although HB 3552 doesn't specifically address this, the bill's focus on consolidating career education within ESDs raises some questions about a possible connection. If so, clarity is needed on how these regional coordinators would function within the new framework, and whether their move to ESDs would enhance or hinder collaboration among schools, industries, and postsecondary institutions. Transparency in this potential restructuring is critical to ensuring it benefits students and regional workforce development efforts.

Finally, while the bill aims to expand access to career pathways, it is important to ensure that funding decisions reflect local and regional needs equitably. The bill requires a funding plan assessment, but it would be beneficial to include explicit mechanisms for periodic review and adjustment to ensure that funding continues to meet workforce demands effectively over time.

Portland Community College truly appreciates the work behind HB 3552 and we recognize the need for stronger regional coordination of CTE programs. However, we believe that addressing these concerns—ensuring community colleges have a substantive role in funding and governance, clarifying the impact on regional coordinators, and maintaining flexibility in funding allocations—will strengthen the bill's effectiveness. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these points further and collaborate on ways to enhance the bill's impact.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let us know if you have any questions.

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