

**East Portland Chamber of Commerce**

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April 3, 2025

**Joint Ways and Means Education Subcommittee**

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301



Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tye Gabriel, and I am President at East Portland Chamber of Commerce (EPCC). We are writing to urge your full support for the Community College Support Fund at \$920 million for the 2025-27 biennium. Oregon's community colleges are essential in training the skilled workforce our businesses and economy depend on. Without strong investment in these institutions, workforce shortages will continue to grow, limiting economic opportunity for both businesses and workers.

East Portland relies on graduates from Portland Community College to fill critical roles in our small businesses. The hands-on, career-focused training PCC students receive prepares them to enter the workforce immediately, equipped with the technical skills and knowledge needed to succeed. Many of Portland's entrepreneurs started at PCC, gaining the expertise that allowed them lead successful businesses.

The challenge we face is clear: there simply aren't enough skilled workers to meet industry needs. Community colleges are stepping up to address this gap, with enrollment in career and technical education (CTE) programs rising. However, these programs are also among the most expensive to run due to the cost of modern equipment, technology, and specialized instruction. Without sufficient funding, colleges cannot expand these essential programs, and businesses like mine will continue to struggle to find qualified workers.

Community colleges are the backbone of Oregon's workforce pipeline. They provide affordable, accessible training for students of all backgrounds—whether they are recent high school graduates, working adults seeking a career change, or individuals needing additional skills to advance in their fields. However, increasing enrollment and rising operational costs threaten their ability to keep up with workforce demand. Without adequate state support, programs will be limited, tuition may rise, and fewer students will have access to the training they need to secure good-paying jobs in high-demand industries.

The state's investment in community colleges is an investment in Oregon's economy. Without a well-trained workforce, businesses cannot grow, and Oregon will struggle to remain competitive. I strongly urge you to fully fund the Community College Support Fund at \$920 million to ensure our community colleges have the resources to train the skilled workers our state needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tye Gabriel'.

Tye Gabriel

President, East Portland Chamber of Commerce

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