

April 25, 2025

TO: Oregon Ways and Means Joint Subcommittee on Education

RE: Support for Higher Education Coordinating Commission Workforce Programs – Oregon Conservation Corps

Dear Co-Chair Sollman, Co-Chair Ruiz, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Catalina Solarsano, I am an enrolled Klamath Tribal member and reside in Klamath Falls. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission Workforce Programs, specifically the Oregon Conservation Corps.

I joined Lomakatsi Restoration Project's Oregon Conservation Corps program because jobs are very hard to come by where I live. I had an interest in Forestry and Natural Resources, I wanted to learn some skills, and at the same time, I wanted to make a difference to prevent large fires in our region. Through the OCC program, I earned my basic wildland fire Red Card, chainsaw operator certification, and cultural resource monitoring certification. I have learned so much working across private lands, tribal lands, and federal lands across Jackson and Klamath County, working with Lomakatsi's professional crews. I participate in prescribed fire operations across hundreds of acres, as well as fuels reduction and post-fire recovery work.

This program has been life changing. I am a mother of two, and this has enabled me to have consistent employment, this has supported my livelihood, allowed me to take care of my community, and opened new doors and relationships as I work alongside fellow Corps members. When the program ends, I plan to go on to Lomakatsi's inter-tribal Indian Youth Service Corps program for the next two years to advance my training and continue developing in this career path.

I ask that you continue to support funding for the Oregon Conservation Corps program in this next budget cycle so young adults like me can benefit from this incredible opportunity to serve our communities.