

My name is Adrienne Enriquez, and I serve as the Project Director for Oregon GEAR UP. I am urge you to pass a budget that includes funding for HB 2997 to ensure grant funds are available for those who do the very important work of helping Oregon's students make plans for education after high school.

GEAR UP is a college access program primarily funded by the federal government, though we are the only program in the nation to have received private funding to expand our program to serve even more schools. Since 2002, this combined funding has allowed us to help build college going cultures in 109 schools in 48 rural communities throughout the state, serving more than 40,000 students,. Our experience – and our data!- tells us that **intentional, sustained efforts to build college-going cultures in our schools** makes a difference in the lives of students and their families. **Ensuring that state funds are available to increase the number of students** who receive the kind of support we and our colleagues from other college access programs provides is critical for our students and communities.

**Our work is collaborative, and we're better when we work with others who rely on state support to do their work.** In recent years, we have been able to expand our reach even further by growing our statewide services. 75% of Oregon high schools have participated in our Oregon Goes To College efforts like College Application Week, College & Career Exploration Month and Decision Day. In addition to these school-based events, we host a website that has become the go-to resource for Oregon students, families and educators who want to learn about how to prepare, apply, pay for and attend all forms of education after high school. The majority of schools in the state, as well as other college access programs, use our large library of Oregon-specific resources to help students and families make plans for their future. **Our goal is to continue being a trusted resource for our colleagues and communities when you fund this bill.** Oregon students deserve the best, and these funds are part of ensuring they have it. Thank you for supporting and funding HB 2997.