



April 17, 2025

Senator Janeen Sollman
Representative Ricki Ruiz
Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 5525

Dear Senator Sollman, Representative Ruiz, and members of the Subcommittee on Education,

I am submitting written testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 5525, which would allocate funding from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for the second biennium of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE).

As the Information Services Director for the City of Tualatin, I witness daily the growing urgency of cybersecurity challenges facing municipalities and public entities across Oregon. Local governments are often forced into reactive postures, managing the aftermath of incidents that are financially, operationally, and reputationally damaging, particularly for organizations already operating with limited resources.

SB 5525 is important to me because the OCCoE plays a critical role in addressing these vulnerabilities. By developing and deploying student-led cybersecurity support, such as what my city has benefited from. The OCCoE provides immediate, affordable defense services while simultaneously preparing the next generation of cybersecurity professionals. Everyone benefits from these funds.

Today, cybersecurity threats are no longer hypothetical. Virtually every Oregonian has experienced—or will experience—a data breach, identity theft, or disruption of essential services. These threats are persistent, personal, and increasingly costly.

With over two decades of experience in government technology—spanning K–12 education, municipal IT, and state-level systems—I have consistently seen the same core challenge: keeping pace with evolving threats while maintaining continuity of essential public services.



To meet this challenge, Oregon cities urgently need:

- **Affordable Security Operations Center (SOC) services** accessible to local governments statewide
- **Robust workforce development programs** that equip emerging cybersecurity professionals with the skills to defend critical infrastructure

In my earlier career as an elementary educator and later as a technical educator for the Tigard-Tualatin School District, I contributed to the development of Oregon's initial student technology standards. I've seen firsthand how rapidly the technological landscape has evolved—and how essential it is to ensure our workforce evolves with it. I've also seen that training for the workforce of tomorrow begins in elementary school.

That's why the OCCoE and initiatives like ORTSOC are so vital. These programs engage learners from K–12 through graduate education, while providing hands-on cybersecurity services that directly benefit public-sector organizations. Their model is practical, collaborative, and cost-effective, as well as delivers real-time value to communities and building long-term resilience.

I respectfully urge your support for SB 5525 and the \$11.3 million in requested funding. This investment will allow OCCoE to expand its services to more communities and to train more students to meet the cybersecurity threats of today and tomorrow. Our systems and the personal data of every Oregonian are under constant threat, both from external attackers and internal vulnerabilities. Addressing this risk by strengthening both our defenses and our workforce is not only responsible, it is a strategic and future-ready approach to protecting our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Bates Russell
Information Services Director
City of Tualatin

