April 30, 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 – Support for the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE)

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

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 5525, which appropriates essential funding to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for the second biennium of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE). As the Chief Information Officer at Clackamas Community College, I have witnessed firsthand the impact and importance of OCCoE's initiatives in preparing Oregon's workforce and public institutions to meet the ever-evolving challenges in cybersecurity.

Our college is proud to be an active partner in OCCoE's mission. The Certificate in Building Cyber Resilience (CBCR) program, developed under OCCoE's guidance, has equipped our staff and regional partners with critical knowledge and skills to enhance digital safety, incident response, and proactive defense planning. These are not just technical proficiencies—they are fundamental to safeguarding sensitive data, maintaining operational continuity, and strengthening public trust.

Additionally, we had the privilege of hosting the **NW Cyber Camp** at Clackamas Community College, which introduced local high school students to cybersecurity through hands-on experiences and mentorship. This program didn't just educate—it inspired. It opened doors for students, many of whom had never considered a career in cybersecurity, and it planted the seeds for a future-ready workforce in our state.

The demand for skilled cybersecurity professionals across education, government, and critical infrastructure has never been greater. However, smaller institutions and local governments often lack the internal capacity or resources to build out comprehensive cyber programs. OCCoE directly addresses this gap by:
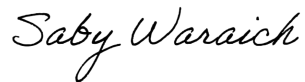
- **Developing scalable and mature cybersecurity frameworks** tailored to public agencies

- **Providing workforce development opportunities** for existing IT and security professionals

- **Creating accessible career pathways** through initiatives like CBCR and youth camps

In my role, I've led our institution through increasingly complex cyber threats, including a recent attack that underscored how vulnerable even well-prepared organizations can be without a coordinated statewide effort. OCCoE provides that coordination. It is not just a training center—it's a lifeline for Oregon's cybersecurity posture.

I strongly urge your support for SB 5525 and the full $11.3 million requested for OCCoE. This investment ensures that vital education and workforce development programs continue to thrive, expanding access and readiness at all levels—from high school students to public agency leaders. The return on this investment will be measured not only in jobs created but in data breaches prevented and communities protected.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Oregon's digital resilience.

Respectfully,

Saby Waraich

Saby Waraich
Chief Information Officer
Clackamas Community College