



May 1, 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 writing on behalf of the Technology Association of Oregon (TAO) to express my support for SB 5525, which would appropriate money from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for funding the second biennium of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE). I serve as a non-voting member on the Advisory Council for the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence, and TAO was one of the organizations that advocated for the creation of the OCCoE.

TAO is a regional technology trade association that represents nearly 500 tech and tech-enabled companies in the state ranging from startups to some of the largest companies in the world. Our mission is to create an inclusive, world-class innovation ecosystem in Oregon, and that means supporting programs and services that expand access to Oregonians who wish to pursue technology careers and start technology companies.

As technology continues to proliferate, and as it plays an increasingly central role in our lives and livelihoods, so too, does the risk from cybersecurity attacks. The private, academic and public sector organizations that TAO works with all face these threats. Many of these organizations have limited resources and lack expertise needed to safeguard data and infrastructure against cybersecurity attacks. The OCCoE serves as a centralized resource, bringing together expertise and best practices from across sectors and offering much-needed training to increase the availability and proficiency of cybersecurity professionals in the state.

As any cybersecurity professional will tell you, in a world as digitally connected as ours, your cybersecurity strategy is only as strong as the least-proficient employee in your organization and the least-secure organization that you transmit data with. Cybersecurity threats are constantly evolving, which requires consistent diligence and investments in the tools and training required to keep up. This can be a monumental and expensive proposition for many organizations. Through shared services, the OCCoE helps to level the playing field against cybersecurity threats, especially for under-resourced organizations in the state.



According to CompTIA, one of the largest international associations that provides training to technology professionals, cybersecurity occupations continue to be among the fastest growing among all technology career paths. Demand is far outstripping supply in many jurisdictions around the world, and that is true for Oregon, as well. These occupations are also high-wage, and many do not require a college degree to get started. In this way, among all technology careers, cybersecurity occupations offer one of the quickest pathways to increasingly higher wage opportunities. By offering real-world, applied learning opportunities through programs supported by the OCCoE, Oregonians can acquire the skills and training needed to start and advance their cybersecurity careers while at the same time helping to shore up the cybersecurity defenses of Oregon's most vulnerable institutions. And the OCCoE offers these services at a fraction of the cost of developing these capabilities independently, thereby saving taxpayers money.

The OCCoE is critical to protecting the ability of institutions to provide essential public services to Oregonians. SB 5525 allocates \$11.3 million to the OCCoE to staff, train Oregon's workforce, and provide direct services to under-resourced local governments, school districts, etc. This is a relatively small investment for the State to make to support an organization with a significant mission and demonstrated impact. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Skip Newberry".

Skip Newberry
President & CEO, TAO