

March 20, 2019

To: Chair and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education

From: Nathaniel Brown, OBI

RE: OBI Testimony in Support of Additional Investment in the Community College Support Fund

Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Oregon Business & Industry's (OBI) membership of more than 1,600 businesses that employ nearly 330,000 people in the state, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue. OBI members value Oregon's public education system and support efforts to establish stable funding for strategic, evidence-based investments that result in measurable outcomes in student achievement.

That is why OBI supports additional investment in the Community College Support Fund (CCSF) this session. The Governor's budget and the budget released by the co-chairs of this committee is will not effectively meet student and workforce needs across the state.

We hear every day from OBI members that in a tight labor market, a limiting factor on their growth is access to qualified talent. Community colleges across the state lead the way in partnering with businesses in their communities to train students for specific skills they'll need in local jobs, which often lead to effective hands-on learning opportunities and better economic outcomes for the students and community as a whole. It's an education that leads directly to higher-wage jobs and a better life.

Providing community colleges with the resources to expand their programs – especially Career and Technical Education (CTE) -- is one of the most effective things the Legislature can do to offer head starts and second chances to students who need a flexible and local higher education option.

OBI stands with our partners at the Oregon Community College Association to first and foremost support funding decisions that will maintain existing academic programs with a minimal tuition increase. Additional dollars must also be allocated to the CCSF that will expand access to CTE programs through Measure 98 implementation. As leaders in Oregon's business community, we also request additional funds for wrap-around services for first-generation and underrepresented student populations. These programs are proven to lead to better educational outcomes and in turn, our economy benefits when more Oregonians have basic access to higher education. Making this investment today will lay the foundation for greater diversity in the supervisory and management ranks years from now.

Any student in Oregon who wants to go to college should have access to that opportunity with the support required to succeed once they arrive on campus. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these critical investments in our students, our workforce and our state.

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