

March 8, 2013

House Education Committee – Testimony in support of HB 2743

Chair Gelser and Committee members,

My name is Roberta Dunn and I am here today to share on behalf of the Think College! Oregon Stakeholder group our support for HB 2743. I am also the Executive Director of Family and Community Together, FACT, Oregon's Parent Training and Information Center, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education. And most importantly, I'm a parent of an amazing young man who experiences disability and is in transition programming. Too often the worlds of general education and special education are siloed systems running parallel with little opportunity for intersection. Likewise, our K-12 system and our higher education systems lack a sense of seamless transition, each doing great work but with the appearance of a great divide between the two. Today's focused energy and commitment to increasing high school diploma acquisition, participation in post secondary education, and creation of a work force at the ready requires a different approach – an "all men on deck" approach. The Think College! Oregon Stakeholder group supports that HB 2743 will move us in the right direction and support the work that we have been committed to for several years. Other groups in the disability community have made strides in this area; specifically I refer to the energy put into development of an MOU between the ODE, ODDS, and VR. The work of Think College! Oregon, the MOU group, along with that of others, will be able to inform the work of the Task Force on High School and Transition Success.

The proposed membership of the Task Force includes the necessary representation to address the issues and barriers to high school and transition success and its constitution demonstrates the complexity of the issues at hand. The students involved are not homogeneous. We are talking about students that experience disability on a wide continuum; students with learning differences and learning disability that with support in transition might still acquire a standard diploma and perhaps pursue college or vocational training; a student who was a non completer because they failed to fit in to our prescribed learning style might be reengaged with adult learning models available at a community college; and young adults with intellectual disabilities offered life skill training that desire access to academic programs and college in pursuit of certificate that puts them on a career path. Speaking of the students the Task Force would be addressing, I would encourage consideration of the addition to the Task Force an appointment of a student in or recently having completed transition services and a parent of a student in or recently completed transition student.

On behalf of the Think College! Stakeholder group, we encourage support of HB 2743 and offer our ongoing partnership. We believe that implementation of HB 2743 will contribute greatly to the Governor's 40-40-20 goals and overall reform of Oregon's education system. Thank you for your consideration and I'm happy to answer questions.

Roberta Dunn
Beaverton OR
503-310-0050