

March 17, 2015

Senate Committee on Education

c/o Gretchen Engbring, Committee Administrator

Regarding SB322

Dear members of the Education Committee,

As a parent of two students who have benefitted tremendously from the PACE program I would like to share my perspective. While there are many benefits of living in a small rural community, scholastic opportunity is at best a challenge. There are many contributing factors and the greatest of these is the limited access and availability of a wide range of courses. It isn't practical or affordable to hire a teacher to instruct a class of four in an advance science, language, or math class. Without these higher level classes our students simply can't compete for scholarships or colleges with the larger schools who can offer a large variety of complex college preparatory and AP classes.

These programs for small rural schools are an economical way to provide our students with the variety and complexity they need to be successful. That in and of itself would be enough justification but there is so much more to it. I have been witness to a change in our entire community because of the PACE program. Our students are thinking beyond graduation and have a seriousness and purpose, a goal. There is an energy and excitement combined with a sense of responsibility that I see in these PACE students. It means something to them and as they say "the proof is in the pudding".

My son Jacob started PACE his senior year and continued at LBCC for the 5th year. He then dual enrolled at Oregon State and is now in the Engineering Professional program. My daughter Jenny began PACE her junior year and completed two years in the program before she enrolled in the Honor's College at Oregon State University studying Biochemistry/Biophysics. She is nineteen and has senior standing. Both of my children completed nearly all of their core credits while in the PACE program. In comparison to many of their classmates who did not participate in the program, they are mature, driven, determined, and serious about their life goals.

Why the fifth year? Well, my children are a very good example of why the fifth year is so important. Some kids just take a bit longer to mature. While my daughter started full-time as a junior and never looked back my son just wasn't ready. He needed that additional year to complete his associates. Like many of the majors today they often take longer than four years. This is the case for both of my children. As a middle income family it is very difficult to plan and prepare for two children simultaneously attending college. OSU estimates \$26,000 per student per year (this includes housing). Few families can afford \$52,000 per year, including ours, and though not easy, PACE does make it possible. I can honestly say that without this program it is very likely our children would not have been able to attend college.

I understand and appreciate the concerns the larger schools have with regard to this spending for rural students but I would like to remind them a demand for equality in education would benefit rural students. If equality is the goal then why don't all schools offer the same access to classes, have the same amenities, and have teachers that are paid the same throughout the State? If a Portland school offers three language classes then shouldn't my student also have access to those same opportunities? But reality is something that oftentimes limits the ability to provide equal services and opportunities to all students and I understand that. We aren't demanding an equal education but are asking that when our students have an opportunity available to them that helps to level the playing field, the larger schools don't play the "equal and fair" game because it is disingenuous.

As you consider this bill I do hope you think of each of the students whose lives are given purpose and direction by this program. It is never wrong to do all that we can for our children and in this case I feel strongly it is money well spent. Please oppose SB322.

I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration,

Linda Minten

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