



April 8, 2015

Testimony to Senate Workforce Committee
Provided by: Paloma Sparks, Legislative Director
Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 674, which continues Oregon's reinvestment in career and technology education to for our middle and high school students.

Senate Bill 674 continues the investment the legislature began making in 2011 to restore career and technology education to Oregon's schools. Shop classes were once a staple in middle and high schools across the state. The current lack of a pipeline of skilled workers entering apprenticeship programs and the workforce can be directly linked to loss of those classes. Today, the average age of Oregonians enrolled in certified apprenticeship programs stands at 28. Compare that to the average from before we eliminated this career and technical education: 19.

The CTE Revitalization grant program has proven to be a success. Schools across Oregon are restoring classes with the help of grant funds. They have been able to update equipment that had been dormant for decades. Students are now learning how to use the technology of today and the future. Programs have been restored to over 200 schools across Oregon. Each year the Department of Education has requested proposals, the demand is easily 3:1 for available grant funds.

Today's career and education programs are not limited to the shop classes of old. Students in places like Silverton are preparing for careers in sports medicine as they use DeWalt power drills to learn how to reconstruct blown-out knees. In Joseph, students are mastering computer-aided design skills and industrial automation so that their community will have a work force of skilled computer science professionals ready to support modern manufacturing.

We know that more than 90 percent of all students who participate in career and technical education programs graduate from high school on time. Businesses are clamoring for skilled workers, one of the reasons that so many programs benefit from private-sector partnerships and support.

With Senate Bill 674, Oregon has the chance to extend leading-edge vocational programs to schools around the state.

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