

Hello all,

I am a School Board Member in the Corvallis School District 509J. I am writing to urge you ALL to VOTE YES on SB 1537. Increasing high school graduation rates is a critical goal that we all share. SB 1537 carefully ties the Post-Graduate Scholar Program (formerly known as fifth year programs) to improving high school graduation rates for at risk students. It is modeled off of the experience of districts who have been using this strategy to retain students at risk of dropping out and to engage students who previously dropped out of high school. The fifth year is the “carrot” that gives some students hope, and has helped many become first generation HIGH SCHOOL graduates.

SB 1537 has been very carefully crafted to put severe restrictions on the use of the state school fund for community college tuition for students who have met requirements for a standard high school diploma. It encourages districts to support more students to earn college credits in grades 9-12, including underserved students who traditionally have not accessed these resources. SB 1537 ensures that only students who have no other pathway to college are able to participate. Students eligible to Oregon Promise or Pell Grants will not participate in this program. This bill is aimed at our most at-risk students who would otherwise slip through the cracks.

Students with a GPA below 2.5 can and will succeed in college with this program. They will receive not only the cost of tuition, but also the counseling support that is necessary to help them make the transition from high school to college a successful one. Many of the students who qualify for SB 1537 need this extra support to be successful.

By passing SB 1537, you are giving our most at risk students their best opportunity for post secondary education. You will be changing the lives for a huge group of students who have worked extremely hard to pull up their GPAs after difficult circumstances in their first couple of years in high school. These students are motivated to graduate, go to college, and succeed in life. We have seen success story after success story in Corvallis for students who have participated in Post-Graduate Scholar programs. They have literally saved students' lives. We have also seen a significant increase in our graduation rates due to these programs.

I URGE you to VOTE YES on SB 1537. You will be directly improving the lives of countless hardworking, deserving students in Corvallis and all of Oregon.

Alexis McQuillan
Corvallis School Board Member