Dear Legislators,

I write as the principal of Corvallis High School, a high school that has seen graduation rates rise from 70.1% to 90.3% over the past four years. Aside from the hard work of my incredible staff and its commitment to ensuring the success of those students who have been traditionally underserved, a major factor in the spike in our graduation rates has been the 5th year program in partnership with LBCC. When college became a realistic option for students who never dreamed of being able to go, suddenly the finish line was pushed beyond high school. Students who couldn't see clearly the relevance of even finishing high school were now suddenly earning standard diplomas and enrolling at LBCC. Of the 300 students in last year's cohort, 81 fulfilled the requirements for their diplomas but have deferred them in order to begin their post-secondary educations. Those 81 seniors represent 27% of last year's graduating class! Additionally, I want to put last year's 90.3% grad rate in perspective. Unlike many districts, we don't jettison our alternative school students to another location and then, conveniently, not count them against the main high school's graduation rate. The Corvallis High School graduation rate includes ALL of our seniors, traditional and alternative, and the 5th year program has been a motivator for students in both schools. The graduation rates in Oregon have been receiving much-needed scrutiny, and I know the the legislature and ODE are interested in the best practices for improving graduation rates across the state. As an administrator in Corvallis, I assert that making college a realistic and affordable option for students IS a best practice, and we have the data to support this. Too often in the field of education, we tend to default to systems and programs that stress compliance rather than successful and equitable results. SB 1537 will produce successful outcomes and promote equity. Our students are worth the investment.

Sincerely,

Matt Boring
Principal
Corvallis High School