



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

February 9, 2016

To: Senate Committee on Education  
Senator Arnie Roblan, Chair  
Senator Tim Knopp, Vice Chair

Re: SB 1537– community college transition for at-risk youth in “fifth” year- **SUPPORT**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League believes that governments, at all levels, have a responsibility to oversee and coordinate a comprehensive network of services to maximize children's readiness to be successful in school while optimizing available resources; and to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12. Employment opportunities are closely related to education; therefore, the League supports programs to increase the education and training of disadvantaged people.

SB 1537, with Senator Gelsler’s amendments, clarifies the criteria by which a relatively small number of students may gain ongoing support on a high school campus while attending the first year in a local community college. “Fifth year” programs already in place have demonstrated increased high school graduation rates and increased college persistence rates. They have demonstrated that, with support and a bridge between high school and community college, at-risk students can succeed. These students, primarily due to a GPA less than 2.5, are not eligible for Oregon Promise, yet they have demonstrated staying power to graduate from high school and the determination to succeed in college with this transition year. SB 1537 and its amendments place stringent sideboards to limit this program to some of Oregon’s most vulnerable youth.

Given the lack of revenues in Oregon to fully fund early learning and K-12 basic budgets, and given that about 50% of the state’s General Fund budget now goes to Education, we must examine each use of funding with diligence. We do **support SB1537 with amendments** because it is an innovative, affordable, sustainable program that has demonstrated higher high school graduation rates, increased college persistence rates, and increased earning potential for at-risk students who might otherwise draw heavily on social service funding throughout their lifetime. However, we suggest that ultimately the K-12 budget may not be the best funding source for this program. We see this bill as step-one of a two-part process to maintain and limit these existing programs, so we recommend establishing in the 2017-2018 biennium an alternative funding source, rather than diluting the K-12 budget.

The youth using the bridge program outlined in SB 1537 are students who have been traditionally underserved and did not have the benefit of these early support services. SB 1537 supports their chance to succeed in education and careers.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Christine M. Vogel in black ink.

Chris Vogel  
Children at Risk/Education Portfolio