



February 23, 2017

House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce

Representative Jeff Reardon, Chair

900 Court Street NE, Room 431

Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for HB 2782 – Full Funding of OSU-Cascades Expansion

Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

This letter is in support for HB 2782 to fully fund the expansion of the OSU-Cascades campus in Bend. The presence and growth of OSU-Cascades is critical to the health of our state and the Central Oregon region. It has forged partnerships, built a home-grown workforce and elevated the region's ability to attract and retain a diverse economy.

Central Oregon continues to outpace growth statewide with 44,000 more people expected by 2025, making the lack of higher education opportunities more acute. Governor Brown has emphasized a desire to fund projects that prioritize access to higher education, particularly for underserved minorities, first generation, low income, and rural students. The first four-year public university to be built in Oregon in 50 years, OSU-Cascades can uniquely deliver on these crucial goals.

Most public college students, particularly those less affluent, enroll within 50 miles of home. OSU-Cascades draws 70 % of its students primarily from Central Oregon, which is geographically isolated and under-served in regards to higher education opportunities. The average student is 29 years of age, 35% are first generation attendees, 18% are U.S. minorities and 50% are Pell Grant eligible (low income).

This campus has so thoroughly answered the need for education of underserved students in Central Oregon, that OSU-Cascade's enrollment has been the fastest growing in our state each year since 2011. Capacity is projected to be reached by 2021 –barely enough time to plan, permit and construct new facilities. For this reason, it is critical to receive full funding to begin construction of new academic and student services facilities immediately.

By 2025 OSU-Cascades will contribute nearly \$198 million in statewide economic output and more than 2,000 jobs. The impact of this economic activity and job generation to Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties is, frankly, a game-changer for the region's economic health. Central Oregon employers need more graduates to



fill burgeoning industries of high tech, biosciences, healthcare, manufacturing and professional services. Yet, this trajectory could be stunted without the capability to keep pace with workforce needs.

We urge you to advocate for, and pass, HB 2782 to fully fund the need for education and economic viability that will support the healthy, self-sustaining growth of Central Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Katy Brooks
Bend Chamber
President

Ann Gawith
La Pine Chamber
Executive Director

Joe Krenowicz
Madras – Jefferson County Chamber
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Judy Trego
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