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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:

We are writing in support of HB 2782 that would provide \$69.5 million in state bonds to support the expansion of OSU-Cascades. Along with funding for K-12 education, we believe this is one of the highest priorities for advancing educational attainment in our region.

We are the Superintendents of every school district and ESD in Central Oregon. As educational leaders, we know the impact that a college degree has on economic and social well-being. On average, bachelor degree holders earn nearly twice that of high school graduates, and are half as likely to be unemployed. As the future parents of students that we will see in our K-12 schools, they will also be more involved in their child's education, and less likely to be a drain on our state's social services.

We meet monthly with the leaders of OSU-Cascades and Central Oregon Community College in order to work collaboratively on education initiatives for Central Oregon. For example, Better Together is our regional, cross-sector partnership working collectively to improve children and youth success from cradle to career. In this effort, we are aligning our existing, emerging and new efforts around shared outcome measures to ensure that Central Oregon students thrive.

Knowing the importance of higher education, we are very concerned that Central Oregon is extremely underserved for the size of our region. Not only are we the fastest-growing region of the state in population, we are also the fastest growing in K-12 enrollment. Without additional capacity at OSU-Cascades, our future graduates will not have access to a nearby university. For many of our low income, first generation, underrepresented, and rural students, this access to a nearby university is critical in their decision of whether or not to go to college. We are working hard to improve the college-going culture of our students, and it would be for naught if there were not capacity for them in our region.

We know that the state budget is tight and you are facing difficult choices. But investing in higher education in Central Oregon will be an investment that increases state tax revenues and reduces state costs in the long run. We ask you to support HB 2782 and invest where the return is the greatest.

Sincerely,

Shay Mikalson, Bend-La Pine Schools  
Duane Yecha, Crook County School District  
Stefanie Garber, Culver School District  
Michael D. McIntosh, Redmond School District  
Curtiss Scholl, Sisters School District  
Rick Molitor, 509J School District and Jefferson County ESD  
John M. Rexford, High Desert ESD