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Chair Lininger, Members of the Committee, Madam Speaker, and Representative Bentz thank you for this opportunity. My name is Nicole Albisu and I am the Superintendent for the Ontario School District and I am here in support of House Bill 2012. To begin with I'd like to thank Madam Speaker and Representative Bentz for sponsoring this bill. Your belief and investment in our community is commended.

Having spent the past 18 years in Ontario, I understand the unique challenges that our community, particularly the students and their families, face. This bill has the potential to change the lives of our students and their families, forever.

Four years ago, the three largest school districts in Malheur county came together, with very little money and even fewer resources because we recognized how important having career technical educational opportunities was for our students, as well as our community. These types of programs provide opportunities to our youth who often have trouble envisioning their own future.

Through Poverty to Prosperity and Treasure Valley Tech, not only have we kept kids engaged and in school, they have been given choices that they may otherwise not have had. Not only are they graduating high school, but now they can continue on with technical training or even college after high school, or go directly into the local workforce. In the past 5 years Ontario School district has increased its graduation rates from 52 to 81%. Our county graduation rates have improved by 22%. This is due in large part to our CTE/career pathways programs.

I'm not going to lie, the journey hasn't been easy. Each year, with fingers crossed and wishes made, we hope to have secured another grant or funding opportunity to sustain these programs for yet another year. And of course, each year we hope to have adequate funding and resources to expand on these programs. This bill could easily support an organizational structure that is more stable and sustainable.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to speak. Although this bill supports the economic health and recovery of our region in many ways, I hope you see it through the lens of a young person. This is really an investment in them. It helps us to provide rigorous and relevant career pathways that engage students in planning for their future, and the future of their families, right here at home. This type of investment has no limit to its success.

Respectfully,

Nicole Albisu