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Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Education,

We, Latino Network, are writing to express our strong support for the Oregon Youth Development Council and its programs that help youth who face barriers get back on the path to high school graduation, college and/or career success. Latino Network has received YDC funding for the last two bienniums. Funding has supported four programs: the Latino Student Action Council, Escalera, Cambio Cafe, and Proyecto Esperanza. We strongly urge you to continue to fund the Oregon Youth Development Council under the Youth Development Division at ODE so that it can continue to support programs that uplift and empower opportunity and priority youth.

Latino Network is a culturally specific service provider and advocacy organization that primarily serves the Latinx community. Latino Network's mission is to positively transform the lives of Latinx youth, families, and communities. Our work springs from the core belief in Latinx community self-determination—that is, the ability of community members to participate meaningfully in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their families. Latino Network serves Multnomah and Washington Counties with school and community-based services including early childhood education, middle and high school youth engagement programs, arts and culture, health and wellness, family stability, and civic engagement. We work to reduce racial, ethnic and health disparities by addressing socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity in access to services.

The *Latino Student Action Committee* (LSAC) is an eight month youth leadership program that promotes civic engagement among high school students while also bolstering their understanding of social disparities. LSAC joins high school students from across the Portland Metro area to collaboratively explore social justice issues, learn from local professionals, and practice invaluable leadership skills including public speaking, project planning, and teambuilding. Students receive numerous opportunities to apply their leadership throughout the program. Since the program's inception nearly two years ago, students' accomplishments include leading workshops at statewide leadership conferences that focus on immigration and youth leadership, traveling

abroad to do service, and advocating for improved sexual and mental health education in Oregon.

Escalera increases the academic success of 11th and 12th grade priority youth to ensure they are on-track for high school graduation, achieve graduation, and are prepared for post-secondary success. *Escalera* at Madison High School serves 40 Latino students, providing group sessions after school as well as during the summer months that focus on academic performance, college applications, career planning services, and workforce skill-building activities such as completing resumes and participating in mock interviews. Students also receive individual case management to help them meet specific academic and social emotional goals. Last year, 100% of our *Escalera* students successfully graduated high school and enrolled in college or vocational programs.

Cambio Cafe is a workforce development program that serves opportunity and priority youth that are disconnected, at risk of being disconnected from school, and/or employment. Additionally, the youth we serve in the Rockwood neighborhood are at extreme risk of being gang involved or impacted. The cafe is located at Gresham City Hall, where youth obtain both hard and soft job skills, as well as an entrepreneurial curriculum that provides them with the basics of creating a solid business plan. Youth involved have been active participants in the development of *Cambio Cafe*. The supportive work environment is particularly important for gang impacted youth. Gresham City Hall is a strong and committed partner in this venture and looks forward to recruiting interns from successful *Cambio Cafe* participants. *Cambio Cafe* would benefit from continued funding as the program grows to serve more youth.

Thank you for supporting the advancement of Oregon's opportunity and priority youth. Initiatives such as the Youth Development Council help reduce the historical inequities that these youth face and contribute to the overall advancement of Oregon's communities.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carmen Rubio', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carmen Rubio
Executive Director