

Statement in Support of HB 3391 from Representative Jeff Reardon

INTRODUCTION

This time 7 years ago Career Technical Education and preparation of our workforce to face the economy and opportunities of the future had reached its lowest point in a generation and was on a downward trend. Career Technical Student Organizations or C-T-S-O's for short, had been a source of pride and great contributor to a well prepared Oregon workforce. But, through the 2000's we had lost our way in leading and supporting them and we were just months away from losing them all. But, then we as a body acted and turned it all around...and...today I am asking you to act again.

OVERVIEW OF CTSOs

Who am I speaking about?

Our **FFA programs known as Future Farmers of America** a generation ago—specializing in agricultural education. Our business students learning ethics and the art and science of enterprise in **Future Business Leaders of America**. Our marketing, hospitality, finance, and management students in **DECA—emerging leaders and entrepreneurs**. Our future doctors and medical professionals in **HOSA Health Occupation Students of America**. We were losing our early childhood and family and consumer science organization **Family Career and Community Leaders of America**. We were on the verge of losing all our skilled industry and tradesmen and women in **SkillsUSA** who build our homes, and roads, industrial projects and infrastructure.

Seven years ago we had already lost our Natural Resources student organization...it's hard to believe that a leading natural resources state like Oregon had lost our future caretakers of our great lands. And, we were moments away from losing the rest of our future leadership and workers in the industries and sectors that matter to Oregon's economy and communities. I was determined as a freshman legislator to find other colleagues who shared this passion that looking out for the best interests of our future Oregon had to come from taking swift action with today's students. Luckily, I did not have to look far to find support and cooperation and I am hoping to find that yet again today.

CONTEXT

To make sure all of my colleagues understand what makes these Oregon Career Technical Student Organizations truly special, I want you to just consider the word "OUR". These are "OUR" organizations that provide "OUR" students and young people bright opportunities in "OUR" state. These are not random social clubs or student interest groups. Those have their place, but, are not who I am referring to today or with this bill.

These are "OUR" integrated CTE educational organizations with over 400 industry-based competitive events who provide **leadership** and **professional development** and **scholarships** and **motivation** for students to push their talents from robotics to wood working to semiconductors to culinary to coding to healthcare and hospitality.

Some students compete in athletics throughout high school and every once in a while we turn out an elite athlete who can make a short career in sports. Every day, thanks to our support, thousands of students compete in industry and career-related events with nearly 100% of them going into our universities, community colleges and workforce better prepared for pushing their skills beyond what a typical classroom experience can provide.

And, as a former educator, I can't miss sharing that it takes a CTSO advisor who is a classroom teacher and serves like an athletic coach—but not for just a sports season—but often an entire school year and usually the summers too....sacrificing their lunches and evenings and weekends to make all of this possible. OUR CTSOs are a source of pride and I am so proud of this body for getting behind CTE and CTSOs and these students and teachers the way it has done these past 7 years.

SUMMARY

I'm pleased to report that thanks to the vision and leadership of this body intentionally, wisely, and prudently investing we have reversed the slide in Career Technical Education. When, I joined this body, CTE and CTSOs had dipped their student membership and participation on campuses in a slow steady decline for nearly a decade through the early 2000's.

- When I started, we had 347 CTE programs operating in Oregon Schools and 234 Career Technical Student Organizations to go with them. By the close of last school year, we had over 500 approved CTE programs and not only stopped the CTSO slide in schools, but increased them to 284—50 new school programs (40% increase) over where we began.
- In 2012-13 we had 6 statewide CTSO programs some with just months away from closing. Today, all organizations have been stabilized and are on the path of revitalization. We are now home to 8 statewide CTSOs recently starting up **Oregon Technology Student Association** for STEM/Engineering student leaders and we became the first in America to found the **Future Natural Resource Leaders**.
- In non-agriculture CTSO programs, we increased student participation from 4,465 to 6,798 this current school year. That's a 52% increase and far from the steady year-by-year slide for the decade prior to our legislative action.

Some particular bright spots I want to call your attention to specifically:

- In SkillsUSA, where I once served as one of those CTSO advisors, membership has soared from 940 when we started this journey, to this year eclipsing the 2,000 mark with 2,139 students.
- When we started, our Future Health Professionals in HOSA had not held their annual competition conference in two years and had retreated down to 1 school in Eugene and only 20 students. This year they have 25 schools participating and 820 students engaged in the HOSA program.
- Our newest CTSO, the Technology Student Association already has a 25% membership increase over last year and is priming to become the next fast growth student organization in Oregon.
- Where we had once lost our natural resources student organization, we are now home to Oregon Future Natural Resource leaders with 12 school participating and 180 students engaged in career technical competitions preparing to be stewards and leaders of our natural resources.
- Two (2) new CTSOs added to Oregon's statewide offerings, Technology Students Organization (TSA) and Future National Resource Leaders (FNRL). Both of these organization meet the needs

of CTE/STEM programs in schools that do not currently have alignment to a specific CTSO. For TSA alone, 90%+ of schools with approved Industrial and Engineering Systems (STEM) programs can join TSA. Of those schools, 32% currently have no CTSO presence on campus at all.

- HOSA has an online school engaged as an active chapter. This means that students who attend school virtually now have the opportunity to engage in HOSA programs as virtual members. Instead of imploding like we once were, we are innovating!
- SkillsUSA recently ascended two (2) schools to 100% participation status, meaning 100% of the students enrolled in the CTE program are also registered members of SkillsUSA. There are 60 schools nationwide in SkillsUSA that have this status, and two are located right here in Oregon.
- FCCLA has acquired 3 new chapters specifically concentrated in the area of early childhood education.
- Since we started our revitalization, every single CTSO in Oregon has either experienced significant turn around or been saved from extinction.

HOW DID WE DO IT?

Every legislator faces the same dilemma. How do we take limited resources and apply them to the unlimited needs and wants of our constituency? How do we take important endeavors and strategically invest for the future?

We have not had a lot of additional resources like some of our neighboring states and many states across America to fund millions into Career Technical Student Organization state and local support. So, we had to be innovative with the way we applied the funding the past 7 years to make sure it went as far as it could go with the maximum benefit locally. So here's how we did it:

- **First**, we invested in CTE teacher education and professional development. If we wanted better student participation and engagement, we had to better prepare our teachers to be successful in their additional role as CTSO coaches or advisors. In the last 7 years we went from zero professional development of teachers to providing at least 8 hours of training to over 100 teachers every year. That's more than 5,000 hours of training, technical support, and resources across Oregon.
- **Second**, we ensured the nonprofit incorporation of each CTSO and made sure every administrative dollar poured directly into programs with no loss of funding support to government administrative entities. This allowed for each organization to access a variety of part-time and volunteer support to lead the statewide organizations that had previously been lacking. They in turn secured additional private support and grants that helped bridge funding gaps get industry supporting the organizations. For example:
 - FBLA and DECA have almost doubled their volunteer judge participants from industry
 - Volunteer judge participants from industry has almost tripled for HOSA-Future Health Professionals and SkillsUSA
 - Volunteer judge participants from industry was non-existent initially for FCCLA because it was all handled by placing additional burden on educators, but now they have an

established volunteer base coming from industry to engage in the FCCLA competitive events program.

- **Third**, and what I'm most proud of, we provided incentive grants to local CTSO programs. The grants funded the startup of new programs because its incredibly difficult to start a CTSO program in a school with \$0 in support. We also provided grants to CTSO programs who grew healthy and produced a positive increase in student participation. The grants ranged from \$500 to \$1,500. And, while that may seem like a small amount to us, these teachers and students used it wisely to leverage their local efforts to make big things happen.

SAMPLES OF GRANT USE

- Monument School SkillsUSA used incentive grant funds to attend the Oregon Leadership Institute training for CTSO student leaders. This gave students critical training they would not have otherwise received and allowed students to build their leadership team, become more confident, and better serve their fellow students overall.
- Springfield HOSA was excited to be able to reduce costs for some of their students in need of this support. The funds helped create more capacity for their members to invest time in competition preparation rather than fundraising. It has paid off. They had their best competitive event record this year and will be sending at least 5 students to compete at the HOSA International Leadership Conference this June.
- Redmond FBLA & SkillsUSA both reported that their program serves many of the lower income families in the Redmond area. Many of these students have jobs in addition to school in order to be financial contributors to their families. With both school and jobs, their time and capacity is limited, but this grant has opened so many doors of opportunity for these students that wouldn't not have been available if it weren't for this funding.
- Mazama HOSA utilized the funding to purchase additional learning resources to help students better prepare and excel in their medical competitions. Not only did they see an impact in their performance, but they also had an increase in membership and participation overall.
- Klamath Union DECA just opened a new school-based enterprise. The grant funds were invested in necessary equipment for two main goals: (1) To provide students with a platform to learn about what it takes to manage and run a Coffee Stand and (2) To increase interest in the CTE/CTSO programs on campus. The School-based enterprise provides opportunities to generate additional revenue for their DECA program and to gain International Recognition from DECA through the DECA School-Based Enterprise program.

I would be remiss to claim that the positive results I have shared have come solely from this body. To be sure, without hardworking students who care about their future and our Great State, without incredible commitment and sacrifice from career tech teachers in every sector from business to health to STEM to natural resources, these results would not be possible. But, I can confidently share it has been a partnership together with the Oregon Department of Education and our local schools that the success we have achieved in Oregon would not have happened without the work of this body. And it will not continue to thrive and prosper without your vote of support today.

STUDENT SUCCESS EXAMPLE

I have shared about the remarkable turnaround we have made for Oregon's students and how we stopped the slide and started the drive to grow a well prepared future Oregon workforce. But, I wanted to share just one example of what these organizations can mean in the life of an actual Oregon student who has participated in these CTSOs.

Justus Breshears is a past student alumnus from one of OUR CTSOs...my alma mater...SkillsUSA Oregon. Her mother named her "Justus" because by the time she was born, the father had run off leaving her and her mother alone. As her mom said when she was born, "It's JUST US now."

Justus faced a life we as legislators and leaders find more often than we'd ever like to face in our communities.

Justus encountered struggles that many students face who don't have a strong support system at home, come from underserved communities, or who have faced socioeconomic barriers in their educational and career path and in life.

For Justus, everything changed when she joined Eagle Point SkillsUSA under the leadership of teacher advisor Matt Boren. SkillsUSA is a CTSO that empowers students to become world-class workers, leaders, and responsible citizens. Through hands-on learning and leadership opportunities integrated in Career and Technical Education courses/programs, students like Justus get introduced to resources centered around leadership development, unique learning opportunities to grow, and a **family** away from home.

Justus took advantage of any opportunity that came her way in SkillsUSA, including serving as a Chapter President and as an elected leader statewide leader of Oregon while in high school. Her grades not only improved, but her enthusiasm and commitment exponentially sky rocketed. She found herself staying at school beyond the required hours so that she could continue exploring, learning and pushing the boundaries of their greatest potential.

Ultimately, being in SkillsUSA helped lead Justus to go to college with the Ford Scholars Scholarship, which covered 90% of her college resource needs. Justus is now in her early 20's and successfully earned her degree in Logistics from Portland State University. She is now the Operations Leader for Toyota Motor Corporation in Portland. AND, she also serves as a Leadership Coach for SkillsUSA Oregon with the hope of making her contribution in continuing the leadership and legacy of success through SkillsUSA in Oregon. In her words, "**SkillsUSA was not just a step for me – it was an escalator for my future!**"

The story of Justus is not just any story. It's the story of thousands of students in our Oregon CTSOs who would have been lost had this body not acted decisively when we did 7 years ago. Justus was right in the midst of her pivotal high school years when we acted to save SkillsUSA and the CTSOs and support the schools and teachers and students who desire a better life and a better Oregon.

With the bill we have proposed today, we will continue the prudent, wise and strategic investing in Oregon CTSOs to give every student who wants a chance...not to just take a step...but...to access the same escalator that Justus used to reach her dreams.

This is OUR Oregon. These are OUR CTE career technical student leadership organizations. And, this is OUR chance to continue and grow college and career opportunities for all OUR students you cannot find anywhere else. I thank this committee for its time and commitment to Oregon CTSOs and look forward to even brighter days for all our future students in FBLA, DECA, HOSA, FCCLA, TSA, FNRL, and SkillsUSA that will find doors opened through this bill.