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March 18, 2021

Oregon House Education Committee  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2412, -2 Amendments

Chair Alonso Leon and Members of the House Education Committee:

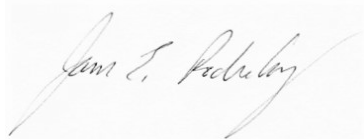
I'm writing to urge your support and adoption of the -2 amendment to HB 2412. This amendment includes funding for five different college access programs that were funded in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). These five programs provide valuable access and support for low-income and historically underserved students to help them achieve their post-secondary goals.

As Interim Vice President for Research & Graduate Studies at Portland State University, and an active researcher, I am familiar with the tremendous success of the BUILD EXITO program and the positive impacts it has on the lives of our student participants. The program has served 542 students, boasting a retention rate of 82.1% with support from mentors and a strongly connected cohort of peers; it has placed 305 undergraduate students in labs where their academic and pre-professional skills and hands-on experience will launch them into a variety of rewarding careers.

Numerous sources clearly indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated existing inequities for our under-represented and first-generation college students. This crisis threatens to broaden opportunity gaps and further disadvantage those students served by programs like BUILD EXITO. I ask that you please consider the vital impact your support for these programs will have, beyond Oregon's universities, in addressing social justice issues and working towards a more diverse STEM work force.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jason E. Podrabsky