

Dear House Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Leslie Tran. I am a BUILD EXITO alumna, and I graduated from Portland State University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Studies: Pre-Clinical Health Science. I am writing on behalf of the EXITO program to ask that you renew state funding for College Access Programs to support students in higher education.

Seeing the impact chronic diseases have on patients and their families as a healthcare volunteer, I wanted to get involved in research focused on disease prevention and progression. Without prior research experience as an undergraduate student, the BUILD EXITO program helped me find my voice in the scientific community and opened the door to opportunities I did not think were possible. Through my continued involvement as a research assistant at OHSU's Layton Aging and Alzheimer's Disease Center, I have contributed to telehealth research studies improving support for dementia family caregivers and enhancing outreach to underserved populations.

BUILD EXITO created a collaborative and inclusive environment for students to connect and learn from peer scholars, faculty, mentors, and research learning communities. In addition to research training, I felt supported in pursuing my educational and career goals in medicine due to guidance from my career mentors, networking opportunities, enrichment workshops, and tutoring services. Funding EXITO will help underrepresented students in higher education, like myself, engage in meaningful research that impacts our communities and explore beyond our perceived limits.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and the opportunity to share my experience.

Sincerely,

Leslie Tran