

April 26, 2023  
RE: House Bill 3120

Dear Co-Chairs Sanchez and Steiner and the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Maria Silva and I am a student at Oregon State University as well as a graduate of Riverside Jr/Sr High School. I'm writing to urge your support of House Bill 3120, which would establish a \$5 million competitive grant fund to be managed by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission in support of college access and success programs like College Possible. College Possible has been an important part of my journey and how I arrived where I am today.

When I first learned about College Possible, they were recruiting students to join during lunchtime at my school. What caught my attention was that they were not shy at all and would go right up to students during their lunchtime and even have conversations with them. They tried to connect with students through similar interests and showed how passionate they were. Seeing how they were trying to recruit students was different from what other programs would do since the majority just sat at tables waiting for students to approach them. After seeing that, I decided to talk to them and sign up for more information.

Being able to learn early on what the college process would consist of helped prepare me for the challenges I later faced and for the main reason I want to go to college. That reason being that I simply want to better myself. What I mean by that is I want to be able to succeed in my future career/goals and in my life. Of course, it is much more complex than just saying I want to succeed. However, College Possible has been able to provide me the help to center my mind on what exactly I consider success and how will I get to that point.

I am currently an engineering student at Oregon State University. Having a coach that provides me all the necessary help to research ways to get there and help me prepare for the first steps I must take, has helped me stay realistic and positive at the same time.

College Possible has supported me in many ways varying from being a support system to being a guide. Without any financial help I would not be able to go to college, but my coaches have made sure to provide me multiple scholarships I qualify for every month and answer any college questions I may have. They also never hesitate to directly reach out and connect with schools to ask questions students may not be comfortable sharing. A memory I have of College Possible that shows how much they care about preparing students for college is when they took us to visit five universities my junior year. Being able to meet new people and participating in events that helped better my understanding of college was an amazing opportunity to get closer to my coach and friends that would later on be a great support system for the challenges I have had to face.

Moreover, I come from an immigrant family where I grew up in a low-income household. The only person in my family that attended college was my oldest brother; however, he only got his associates and did not remember much of what he had to do. So as a first-generation student being in a completely different situation than my brother I would have had to take on the challenge of the college process all alone if not for College Possible. Furthermore, seeing the cost of going to college and all the difficulties to get there is mentally challenging to say the least. Especially since COVID began my junior year. That alone brought even more obstacles to face. Despite everything going on, College Possible was able to adapt to these new circumstances and aid us in preparing for college. Without a doubt College Possible has been a light of hope in between all the struggles I have had to take on.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story with you today.

Sincerely,

Maria Silva  
Oregon State University Student