

May 3, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means

Subject: Support & Fund HB 3236

Dear Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Members of the Committee,

As a school district leader representing a partnership with the Willamette Career Academy (WCA), I ask that the Oregon Legislature make a commitment of \$2,850,000 to the WCA for the 2023-25 biennium.

The success of HB 3236 is more than continuing funding to the Willamette Career Academy – it's continuing the state's commitment to improving access and opportunities for students in historically underserved communities and investing in the success of Oregon students and providing a pipeline of workers to our local industries. As school leaders, we are committed to representing the needs and interests of our students and our community partners. I value the work of the WCA and I value the state's investment in our students.

Serving Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties, the WCA is the first regional Career Technical Education program of its size in Oregon. In the 2022-23 school year the WCA provided six different career educational programs for 250 students, a student base where nearly 57% of students were students of color and 53% of students were female. The WCA exceeds even the high expectations and outcomes of Career Technical Education programs, with 97.6% of their students graduating on time in the first year. Since its first year, the WCA has doubled its programs and increased its partnerships with business and industry.

United in public and private support, the WCA has the active involvement of local industry partners, such as Knife River, Papé Machinery, Freres Lumber, Salem Health, and MaPS Credit Union. The inclusion of industry partners allows WCA students to engage in a sustainable school-to-career pathway – connecting businesses with skilled employees and teaching students the skills needed for high-paying, in-demand local jobs. This ongoing influx of highly skilled workers into our region will make our local counties more attractive to future business and industry investments and will raise confidence in the ability of school programs like WCA to create smart, well rounded, skilled learners to become the next generation of economic leaders.

In order for student success and dynamic growth to continue, the WCA needs support. The funding of HB 3236 will be allocated to the WCA's operating costs, work-based learning, internships, apprenticeship opportunities, and access to high-quality educators

who teach our students. As it grows, the WCA will be able to support over 450 students at its full capacity.

I, and my fellow Superintendents, believe in the Willamette Career Academy and the positive impact it has on our students. We respectfully ask you to support funding of HB 3236 for a brighter future for our students and businesses.

Sincerely,

Ginger Redlinger
Superintendent
North Marion School District
Advisory to WESD Board of Directors
Member of COSA Board of Directors