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# Sheridan Fire District

## Ballston / Buell / Sheridan



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February 13, 2024

Representative David Gomberg  
District 10  
900 Court St. NE, H-480  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Funding request for the Barbara Roberts Career Technical Education Center

Good afternoon, Representatives Gomberg,

Educational equity is essential to bridge the gap between rural and urban schools. While almost all schools offer a few CTE courses, rural schools do not provide the opportunity for students to be CTE Concentrators. Studies have shown that CTE Concentrators have higher graduation rates, earn more money post-graduation, and are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Career Technical Education can transform a region's economy. The link between industry, workforce, and schools creates a powerful force for economic development. Funding Rural CTE programs is an investment in these regions' economic development. Evidence supports that such investments lead to a skilled workforce, job creation, poverty reduction, business attraction, innovation, resilience, and social equity, fostering sustainable economic growth.

The Sheridan Rural Fire Protection District wholeheartedly supports the Sheridan School District's efforts to implement the Regional CTE program for our community. Implementing this critical program will facilitate and stimulate involvement in fire and emergency medical services within our rural area. As you are aware, there is a critical need for additional workforce members within our industry at the volunteer and career levels. The area's lack of qualified, recruited, and retained emergency services persons is a desired and coveted profession that supports all facets of a community and a region's infrastructure. It has also been shown to support and sustain an area's growth potential, with the regions being safer and better served by trained and engaged community members.

It is a challenge for rural communities to fund CTE programs. The critical mass of students required means they must draw from a regional population. Typically, CTE facilities are financed with local general obligation bonds. This is where they must depend on the support of the state.

Sheridan School District and the Sheridan Fire District are partnered to support a regional CTE program. The Sheridan School District is ready to start construction with the support of the State of Oregon. We have created a phased approach, starting with Firefighting/EMT Training and Diesel Tech with Truck Driving programs prepared to be implemented in the first phase.

Thank you in advance for your support,

*Les Thomas*

Les Thomas  
Fire Chief  
Sheridan Rural Fire Protection District