February 12, 2024

To Representatives Elmer and Gomberg:

We are writing this letter of support for the Sheridan School District's application for the Capital Grant. The Mid-Willamette Education Consortium (MWEC) supports Sheridan's goal to expand, build, and strengthen CTE in their region. Career Technical Education can transform a region's economy. The link between industry, workforce, and schools create a powerful force for economic development.

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 funded with local general obligation bonds. This is where they must depend on the support of the state. 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, ultimately fostering sustainable economic growth.

Additionally, educational equity is important 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.

We recommend that you award the Capital Grant to the Sheridan School District; this is a win-win for the students, multiple school districts, Chemeketa Community College, MWEC, and local business partners.

Sincerely,

Ed Woods
MWEC Director

Debbie Johnson
MWEC CTE Regional Coordinator