



Chair Hudson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 3552. My name is Dr. Megan McCarter and I am the Chief Academic Officer at Northwest Regional ESD, which serves 20 districts across four counties, both urban and rural. I am here today to highlight the transformative impact that HB 3552 will have on Oregon's youth - our future workforce - through much needed expansion in Career and Technical Education (CTE).

Currently, students across Oregon - and especially in our rural counties - face significant barriers to accessing high-quality CTE programs due to geographic isolation and resource limitations. For example, in Tillamook County three districts have begun having students participate in hybrid CTE labs across district boundaries - allowing them to engage in hands-on learning at their home district while connecting virtually with expert instructors across the county. Because of resource and geographic limitations, only one program in construction trades can be offered this way despite a host of other industry needs in the area. With the funding provided by HB 3552, we could scale these efforts to multiple career pathways and across all three of our rural counties, establishing CTE labs in each district and enabling cross-district course enrollment to expand options for students. This would include starting new programming aligned to industry needs, providing necessary equipment and hiring CTE instructors in high-wage, high-demand programs that simply do not currently exist in rural communities.

Beyond rural areas, funding through HB 3552 would also allow us to address urgent workforce needs in our more urban counties. For instance, there will be over 133,000 job openings in the Trades and Transportation sector over the next 10 years in the Portland Tri-County area, yet no school district currently offers a program to prepare students for these high-wage, high-demand careers. With regional career centers facilitated by ESDs, we could stand up new programming that would be accessible to all districts in the metropolitan area, ensuring students are prepared for the jobs available in their communities and businesses have the skilled workforce they need to thrive.

ESDs are uniquely positioned to be the backbone of this funding initiative. Our regional structure allows us to coordinate efforts across multiple districts, leverage our established relationships with community colleges and industry partners, and ensure that programming is aligned with regional workforce needs. By facilitating regional career centers, we can create equitable access to workforce development programming regardless of a student's ZIP code.

Oregon businesses need skilled labor and Oregon's students deserve access to the training necessary to fulfill this demand. Yet, as you have heard, Oregon is woefully behind what is available in other states. To become competitive and ensure our young people are career-ready, we must invest in creative, systemic, regional solutions to workforce development. House Bill



3552 provides a crucial step toward ensuring that all students, regardless of where they live, have access to the skills and experiences needed to succeed in high-demand industries.

I urge you to support this bill and invest in a stronger, more equitable future for Oregon's students. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Oregon's future - our youth. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan McCarter".

Megan McCarter | Chief Academic Officer