

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Ginger Pan, a first-year student at the University of Oregon, and a participant in the Summer Bridge Program that was funded by Strong Start. I am writing in support of SB 604: The Strong Start Program at Oregon's Public Universities, which will continue funding for programs that help ease the transition to higher education by providing an early start and giving them access to additional resources.

When I initially applied to the Summer Bridge program (specifically the Catalyst track), I did so more for my interest in science and chemistry specifically. Much of the chemistry experience I had in high school was in the form of lecture, with very little hands-on learning. The prospect of going into a lab and exploring parts of chemistry that I had not previously known much about was very intriguing to me. While Summer Bridge did fulfil that interest, quite well in fact, it was also much more than that.

Through Summer Bridge, I was able to learn much more about the University of Oregon and its many programs available for students to pursue their interests and to find support, not only academically and professionally, but also in other aspects of life. The amount of support and resources available is often something that many students don't know about – usually, information about it is usually only seen in passing on a poster or on social media. Few proactively seek out information about resources. Being exposed directly to these monumentally helpful resources has set me up for success, as I know who and where I can reach out to if I need support. I feel significantly more confident in my ability to navigate challenges and

The transition to college from high school is a tough one for many, and I'd imagine it would've been significantly more of a barrier for me had I not participated in Summer Bridge. Going into college, I wasn't sure what to expect or what to make of it, especially given that I don't have anyone in my family that has gone through a traditional college or university experience. Easing into the college with a low-stress, low-stakes experience made my first week and term significantly less overwhelming than it would've been had I not participated in Summer Bridge.

There is also the experience for many students of moving to a new city. It was something I was somewhat nervous about – after all, it is a new environment away from home. Through Summer Bridge, I was able to get oriented to the Eugene area and the local public transit system before the massive influx of students and family members on the standard move-in days.

I remain connected to my fellow participants and the Summer Bridge peer leaders. Beyond just the academic side of Summer Bridge, having an already established network with people with different backgrounds and academic progressions has been

very useful. I'm generally a very shy person and have historically not been the greatest at making new friends. Spending ten days and bonding with a group of people with similar interests but also different backgrounds was a very rewarding experience. The connections I have with chemistry and biochemistry students with more college experience and the advice and mentorship they have given me is immensely beneficial.

Please continue funding and expanding the Strong Start Program so that more students can benefit from its impactful services. Your leadership and commitment to education will help ensure that Oregon's public universities remain places of opportunity, inclusion, and achievement.

Thank you greatly for your time, and I hope I can count on your support of SB 604, the Strong Start Program!

With gratitude,

Ginger Pan

University of Oregon

Portland & Eugene