

Submitter: Trevor Rabosky
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB604

My name is TJ Rabosky, and I am a proud alum of Western Oregon University.

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 604, which seeks to create the Strong Start Program within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

As a student, I served as a peer advisor for Destination Western—our version of the Strong Start Program—working directly with new students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. That experience ignited my passion for supporting new students, especially as I saw firsthand how this program helped them succeed. Students in Destination Western not only stay enrolled at rates 5-10% higher than their peers, but they also carry higher credit loads while maintaining stronger GPA growth. Seeing their confidence grow as they navigated their first year (all the way through graduation and beyond) reinforced how essential this kind of support is.

When I graduated, I was fortunate to transition into a full-time role dedicated to supporting Destination Western/Strong Start Program. Since then, my commitment to this program and its students has only deepened. Nearly 20% of WOU students have benefited from this initiative, and the impact extends beyond individual success stories. By increasing retention and on-time graduation rates, the program sets students up for long-term success—not just in college, but in their careers and communities. A well-supported first year means more students earning four-year degrees, which strengthens our workforce, bolsters economic growth, and creates a more prosperous Oregon.

The Strong Start Program is vital to the success of our communities and the students it serves, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, first-generation college students, and those from low-income families. This program—and the funding that sustains it—transforms lives by providing students with a **STRONG START** they need to thrive in college and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Investing in the Strong Start Program with Senate Bill 604 is an investment in Oregon's future.