

March 23, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am in support of HB 2997, a crucial bill that builds upon previous legislative efforts (HB 5006 & HB 2412) to ensure continued investment in community-based organizations that serve underrepresented students, more **specifically, the state funding that makes support from the Oregon TRIO Association available to TRIO programs across the state of Oregon.**

This bill would establish a dedicated grant fund within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to distribute resources equitably to TRIO and similar programs that expand college access and success for historically marginalized students. By ensuring sustainable funding, HB 2997 will strengthen the support systems that help first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students persist and graduate.

The tireless work of the Oregon TRIO Association does the following:

- **Expands College Access & Success:** HB 2997 ensures sustainable funding for TRIO programs and other community-based organizations that support low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students.
- **Ensures Equitable Grant Distribution:** Instead of requiring organizations to seek funding through inconsistent budget cycles, this bill establishes a dedicated grant fund managed by HECC to distribute funds fairly and transparently.

The above effects of HB 2997 will increase college enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates among historically marginalized students. We know this because the previous funding under HB 5006 & HB 2412 has demonstrated success in these areas. The Bill will also **strengthen Oregon's workforce** because investing in college access programs prepares students for high-demand careers, contributing to the state's economy and addressing workforce shortages.

As a TRIO Student Support Services Director at the University of Oregon I have experienced firsthand the supports of the Oregon TRIO Association in helping our program access professional development and connect us to other TRIO programs across the state to share best practices for supporting deserving first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students persist and graduate. There is no other state in the country whose state representatives have made this possible from their state TRIO organizations and this is surprising because the past support has made our state cutting edge in our successful support of these vulnerable students. With all the threats to underrepresented

populations lately, support at the state level would be a welcome action in times of uncertainty for the most vulnerable among us. In lifting all people up we are all lifted up.

The students we serve at the University of Oregon are varied – we have typically aged college students coming right from high school, non-traditional students who have taken a break and want to come back to school and earn a degree to support their struggling families, and even formerly incarcerated students. Our success rates are impressive with 78% of our students persisting from one academic year to the next, 81% are in good academic standing, and 74% graduate within 6 years.

Please vote YES on HB 2997, a crucial bill that builds upon previous legislative efforts (HB 5006 & HB 2412) to ensure continued investment in community-based organizations that serve underrepresented students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara J. Parrillo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tara Parrillo

Director, TRIO Student Support Services
University of Oregon