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Avakian and community leaders urge skills investment during local shop class school tours
Bend and Redmond Hands-on learning programs a direct result of the legislature's investment

BEND, OR—Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian today joined educators and community leaders Tuesday for a tour of Bend and Redmond career technical education (CTE) programs while making the case for renewed legislative investment.

“Oregon’s competitiveness is fundamentally linked to the availability of a skilled workforce,” said Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian. “We need to expand access to career education and hands-on learning so that more communities can build the type of programs we’re seeing in Redmond and Bend. The Legislature should keep the momentum going.”

Since 2001, a bipartisan coalition of legislators has directed \$14 million to bring back vocational programs to more than 200 Oregon middle schools and high schools serving more than 100,000 students. The 21st century shop classes prepare students around the state for careers in fields such as advanced manufacturing, health care, renewable energy development and maritime welding.

Last year, the Bend program earned a \$268,000 CTE revitalization grant for renewable energy and electric vehicle technology. In addition, the Redmond CTE program secured a \$475,000 grant to engage students in advance manufacturing – with both programs leveraging additional resources from local partners.

During the tour, Commissioner Avakian and community leaders saw students building electric vehicles as several stages of production, as well as Redmond’s advanced manufacturing focus featuring students navigating CAD design software and 3D printing.

The applied learning of CTE programs helps develop both academic and technical skills and contributes to a rich and relevant learning experience. Graduation rates for students in CTE programs are near 90 percent, according to the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium.

“These programs engage students and support job creation,” said Avakian. “I deeply appreciate the hard work of teachers and community partners who are making these programs successful. They’re not just helping individual students, they’re building a stronger, more competitive region.”

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) jointly appoint the Career and Technical Education Revitalization Advisory Committee. The committee evaluates

proposals based on geographic diversity, demonstration of local partnerships, and other criteria. Grant criteria and a map of grant-funded programs are available upon request.

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