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To: The Higher Education Coordinating Commission  
From: Cam Preus, OCCA Executive Director  
Subject: Central Oregon Community College District Boundaries  
Date: July 31, 2019

The Oregon Community College Association serves as the collective voice for the state's 17 community colleges, and from that perspective, would like to raise some concerns related to the petition before you to remove North Lake County from the Central Oregon Community College Service District.

When making this decision, we would strongly urge the commission to view it through the dual lenses of the state's 40/40/20 goal and the 2018 Oregon Adult Education and Training Goal. One of the most critical gaps in the statewide goals is attainment of degrees and certificates at the Associates level. To fill these gaps, we should be ensuring as broad of access as possible across the state. Residing within a community college districts provides many benefits such as lower in-district tuition rates and access to services that would not otherwise be available. Unfortunately, granting this petition could put such degree or certificate attainment further out of the reach for those living in North Lake County.

The economic and geographic challenges of serving very rural and frontier service areas are not unique to North Lake County. We strongly believe there are better ways to overcoming the barriers to serving rural districts than allowing the reach of post-secondary education to recede to just the parts of Oregon that are densely populated enough to easily serve. The state should be expanding community college service areas to meet its own ambitious education attainment goals rather than dismantling districts and risk reducing access.

Since the petitioners brought this issue forward, Central Oregon Community College has been actively reaching out to their Lake County partners to get a clear sense of community needs and how to work in cooperation to address them. Part of those conversations have included the possibility of partnership with other community colleges. In this case, the North Lake School District has an existing distance education partnership Klamath Community College, which could be an alternative service provider for North Lake County. Currently, both colleges are amenable to serving North Lake County based on whichever college district best meets the community needs.

We thank you for your attention to this issue and strongly urge the commission consider whether the decision you will make on this petition supports the goal of increasing access and attainment to post-secondary education and training opportunities statewide.