

OCTOBER 6, 2021

ANDREW MCGOUGH
TESTIMONY TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

GOOD AFTERNOON. MY NAME IS ANDREW MCGOUGH AND I'M THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WORKSYSTEMS, THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD SERVING THE CITY OF PORTLAND, WASHINGTON, AND MULTNOMAH COUNTIES. I'M HERE TODAY ON BEHALF OF THE OREGON WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP WHICH IS THE STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS WHO ARE COMMITTED TO WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND SUCCESS OF OREGON'S WORKERS AND BUSINESSES.

WHILE I KNOW SHARI DUNN WILL BE PRESENTING THE ADULT LEARNER ADVISORY REPORT TO YOU LATER TOMORROW, I THOUGHT I'D TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE SOME IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES WE HAVE THAT COULD HELP TO IMPLEMENT AND SUPPORT A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT.

IN 2019, ARGUABLY ONE OF THE BEST ECONOMIC YEARS IN OREGON'S HISTORY, THE PUBLIC WORKFORCE SYSTEM, KNOWN STATEWIDE AS WORKSOURCE OREGON, SERVED MORE THAN 166,000 ADULT JOBS SEEKERS – APPROXIMATELY 10,000 MORE THAN THE COMBINED ENROLLMENT OF OUR STATE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

USING THE WSO SYSTEM AS A MECHANISM TO IDENTIFY, RECRUIT AND CONNECT ADULTS IN NEED OF LITERACY OR OTHER CREDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES IS A MASSIVE OPPORTUNITY WAITING TO HAPPEN. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE FIRST STARTED DELIVERING THE NATIONAL CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE IN THE PORTLAND METRO WORKSOURCE SYSTEM, WE FOUND THAT MORE THAN 60% OF THE 100,000 ADULTS WE TESTED SCORED BELOW 9TH GRADE IN MATH AND/OR READING.

BUILDING THE SYSTEMMIC RELATIONSHIPS TO CONNECT THESE INDIVIDUALS TO LITERACY AND OTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES MAXIMIZES AVAILABLE RESOURCES AND POSITIONS US TO ACHIEVE OUR SHARED GOAL OF IMPROVING THE QUALIFICATIONS AND SUCCESS OF ADULT WORKERS.

THE REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT CAREER COUNSELING BE EXPANDED TO ADULT LEARNERS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITIES AND OFFER SUPPORT TO NAVIGATE THE SERVICES AND SYSTEM. CAREER COUNSELING IS A CORE COMEPETENCY THAT IS FOUND IN ALL 38 WORKSOURCE CENTERS ACROSS THE STATE. IN ADDITION, IN THE PORTLAND METRO REGION, WE SUPPORT APPROXIMATELY 70 CAREER COACHES EMPLOYED BY AND HOUSED AT COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO MANY OF OUR COMMUNITY'S MOST UNDERSERVED AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, INCLUDING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR, IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES, AND PEOPLE IN POVERTY. PARTNERS ACROSS OUR NETWORK WORK TOGETHER TOWARD THE SHARED GOAL OF HELPING THE POPULATIONS WE SERVE TO ENTER CAREER-TRACK EMPLOYMENT IN HIGH-DEMAND, MIDDLE-INCOME JOBS.

THE REPORT RECOMMENDS EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIPS AND OTHER EARN AND LEARN OPPORTUNITIES. WORKFORCE BOARDS ACROSS THE STATE HAVE BEEN LEADERS IN EXPANDING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING RECENT AND EMERGING APPRENTICESHIPS IN MEDICAL ASSISTING, CHILDCARE, EMT, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH. IN ADDITION, WORKFORCE

BOARDS HAVE BEEN LEADERS IN ADVOCATING FOR AND SUPPORTING REGISTERED PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS AS A KEY STRATEGY TO HELP DIVERSIFY THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE. COMPETENCY-BASED YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, ADULT WORK EXPERIENCE, AND ON-THE-JOB TRAINING ARE KEY STRATEGIES SUPPORTED BY ALL WORKFORCE BOARDS ACROSS THE STATE.

THE REPORT ENCOURAGES EXPANDING ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES LIKE CHILDCARE AND HOUSING, TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR ADULT LEARNERS. IF WE'VE LEARNED ONE THING FROM THIS PANDEMIC IT'S THAT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IS MORE THAN JUST THE ACQUISITION OF SKILLS. OVER THE COURSE OF THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF, MY BOARD HAS DISTRIBUTED MORE IN RENTAL ASSISTANCE, INCOME SUPPORT AND CHILDCARE, THAN WE HAVE IN TRADITIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES. BRAIDING THESE RESOURCES IS ESSENTIAL, ESPECIALLY FOR HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES.

FINALLY, I AM LEAVING A FLYER BEHIND THAT CALLS FOR SPECIFIC INVESTMENTS TO SUPPORT AND EXPAND SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES I MENTIONED. THIS REQUEST IS SUPPORTED BY NEARLY 80 ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE STATE AND OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE THE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ADULT LEARNING ACROSS THE STATE. WE WOULD WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADD THE HECC TO OUR GROWING LIST OF PARTNERS AND TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR SHARED GOALS.

THANK YOU.