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Revenue Forecast Statement from P-20 Education Leaders

Education leaders are calling on lawmakers to respond to today's quarterly forecast by using their best economic recovery tool: fully investing in public education from pre-school through post-secondary education.

Advocates from American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Oregon, American Association of University Professors (AAUP Oregon), Association of Oregon Faculty (AOF), Children's Institute, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), Oregon Community College Association (OCCA), Oregon Education Association (OEA), Oregon's Public Universities, Oregon School Board Association (OSBA), Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), and the Oregon Student's Association (OSA) say that making strong investments in education is not just good for students, it's an approach that is good for the economic health of the state.

"A proven strategy to stimulate a sustainable and equitable economic recovery is to make critical investments in the state's education sector," said Oregon State University President F. King Alexander. "Economists have demonstrated that these investments will result in short-term economic stimulus as well as build on our long-term human investment in students," he added.

Economic modeling has demonstrated this case for years. In 2002, the Oregon School Boards Association, Coalition of Oregon School Administrators and Oregon Education Association commissioned a study by ECONorthwest that found a "fundamental relationship" between education and the economy. Education dollars continually flow through local communities, generating additional spending and job creation. That study, which was reaffirmed in 2009, noted that K-12 public education alone is the state's largest employer.

Taken together, the preschool through post-secondary education continuum far eclipses any other Oregon employer in size of workforce and economic impact in every Oregon community.

Oregon's projected budget shortfall for the 2021-2023 biennium is \$1.8 billion. Education advocates note that the state can close this gap with a blend of federal, state, and local resources, bolstered by judicious use of reserves, federal dollars, and common-sense revenue adjustments.

Arguing for a full P-20 investment, special education assistant and President of the Oregon School Employees Association Lisa Gourley noted that "the willingness of policymakers to commit resources to protect the state's fragile cradle-to-career public education system may determine whether the impact of COVID-19 is measured in years or in generations."

Noting that economic and health impacts of the pandemic have exacerbated historic inequities for Oregon's Black, Indigenous and people of color, as well as first-generation and low-income students, the coalition called for full funding for investments in the education sector that create opportunity and promote racial, social and economic equity for Oregon students.

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Media Contacts:

Pre-K / Early Childhood

Rafael Otto, Children's Institute

503-219-9034

rafael@childinst.org

K-12

Laurie Wimmer, Oregon Education Association

503-495-2116

Laurie.Wimmer@oregoned.org

Alex Pulaski, Oregon School Boards Association,

apulaski@osba.org

Community Colleges

Casey White-Zollman, Oregon Community College Association

503-399-9912

casey@occa17.com

Public Universities

Dana Richardson, Oregon Council of Presidents

503-559-8569