

September 16, 2008

Governor Ted Kulongoski
Oregon State Capitol

Members of the Oregon 2009 Legislature
Oregon State Capitol

On behalf of The Oregon Consortium and Oregon Workforce Alliance, we the members of the TOC/OWA Emerging Worker Committee and pleased to forward this letter of support for Policy Package 110 – The Oregon Summer Youth Employment Program.

The Oregon Employment Department released recent statistics that project that over the next decade there will be nearly 700,000 job opening that will need to be filled in order to respond to business expansion and to address the turnover in current jobs (primarily – over 400,000 – due to retirement). Given these statistics we feel that the need for increased workforce preparation, skills and experiences for young men and women has never been greater.

At the same time, federal investments that once supported programs which brought together appropriate educational opportunities and work experiences have shrunk to a point where only minimal services can be provided to these young men and women who will support Oregon's economic future.

Policy Package 110 – The Oregon Summer Youth Employment Program will create 3,000 summer jobs annually for young men and women between the ages of 16 and 25 and will be lead by the seven local workforce investment boards, who have a track record of excellent performance and the ability to align and leverage resources for a greater return.

The Oregon Summer Youth Employment Program will help Oregon turn the tide on low youth employment rates by providing targeted, structured subsidized employment coupled with tailored educational assistance. This “earn and learn” approach will have long term economic impact on young adults. In fact, according to recent testimony before the US House of Representatives by CLMS “there are many employment related skills, including the soft skills of attendance, punctuality, team work, and customer services . . . that are highly valued by employers but can only be learned on the job. There also is a very strong path dependence in teen employment, i.e. the more teens work this year, the more likely they are to work the following year.”

We hope that you will join us in support of this innovative project that will help Oregon's youth prepare for their future and Oregon's economy to thrive in the future.

Warmest regards,

Larry Blount, Chair
The Oregon Consortium & Oregon Workforce Alliance – Emerging Worker Committee