



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

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CONTACT: Kate Newhall, 503-467-1665

Career Education Bill Wins Unanimous Approval in Key Committee *Bipartisan legislation to strengthen our workforce moves forward in Salem*

SALEM – Bipartisan legislation to revitalize and enhance Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Oregon’s middle schools and high schools won unanimous approval in the House Education Committee today. The vote comes just one week after a broad coalition of businesses, labor unions, trade associations, educators, and elected leaders came together in the State Capitol to emphasize the importance of CTE to Oregon’s economic future.

“The best way to expand economic opportunity tomorrow is to expand educational opportunity today,” said Bureau of Labor and Industries Commissioner Brad Avakian. “Restoring practical career education in our schools will help prepare more Oregon students for living-wage jobs while ensuring more Oregon businesses have the highly skilled workers they need to succeed.”

HB 3362, which already has 59 co-sponsors in the Oregon Legislature, would jump-start the revitalization of CTE in Oregon’s middle schools and high schools by: (1) establishing a grant program to fund the restoration and expansion of CTE classes; (2) facilitating the formation of future skill centers and CTE-focused charters; (3) requiring inter-agency coordination on CTE issues; and (4) fostering CTE partnerships between public schools, community colleges, universities, businesses and unions.

“Oregon’s labor movement has long been committed to providing early training opportunities for the next generation of Oregon workers,” said John Mohlis, Executive Secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council. “This bill will help us expand those efforts in partnership with the business community and our schools, enabling us to equip more students with the tools they need to earn high-wage jobs.”

Restoring CTE classes will help address labor shortages and skill gaps in several industries – such as health care, manufacturing, construction, renewable energy, and high-tech services – and an enhanced CTE system will present students with options ranging from traditional shop classes to cutting-edge training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

“Oregon’s business community is uniquely positioned to help Oregon’s schools figure out how to target career training so it matches up with our greatest workforce needs,” said Frank Wall, Executive Director of the Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association. “This legislation gives us the opportunity to rebuild our career and technical education programs in a way that maximizes the benefit for both employers and employees and provide a brighter future for our students.”

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The CTE bill now moves to the Joint Ways and Means Committee, where it is being championed by Vice-Chair Senator Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose). “The long-term health of our economy depends on a strong workforce, and revitalizing vocational training is essential to that goal. I look forward to taking up this bill in the Ways and Means Committee, and I am committed to getting it to the Governor for his signature.”

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