



Commissioner Brad Avakian

Bureau of Labor and Industries

Press Release

For Immediate Distribution

June 17, 2011

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Avakian Scores Win on Restoring Career and Technical Education

Legislators endorse funds, plan to expand CTE options in Oregon public schools

SALEM – The Oregon Legislature’s Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction today approved House Bill 3362B, State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian’s priority legislation to reinvigorate career and technical education (CTE) in Oregon public schools. Avakian, head of Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), has spearheaded a diverse coalition of business interests, labor groups, education professionals and others to advocate for the popular proposal. Approval by this committee paves the way for approval by the full legislature in coming days.

“To regain our economic competitiveness, Oregon must ensure that every student has access to high-quality CTE options that teach emerging or in-demand job skills,” Avakian said. “21st century vocational education, setting sights on fields like green technology and health professions, will help prepare kids for living-wage jobs, but also show them the real-world application of the material they’re already learning in school.”

The revitalization plan, co-sponsored by 59 members of the Oregon Legislature, will jump-start CTE programs in Oregon’s middle and high schools by: (1) establishing a \$2 million grant program to fund the restoration and expansion of CTE classes; (2) facilitating the formation of future skill centers and CTE-focused charters; and (3) promoting CTE partnerships between public schools, community colleges, universities, state agencies, local businesses and labor unions. Passage of the bill does not end the coalition’s push on this issue—Avakian has laid out a 10-year vision for every Oregon student to have access to high-quality CTE options.

“We’re making an important investment in Oregon’s economy, here,” said Representative Michael Dembrow (D-Portland). “But we’re also investing in our kids. CTE programs have a proven track record of success, graduating well over 90% of their students. We’re making clear that we want students all over the state to have the skills they need to access a good, living-wage job.”

Oregon’s economic health is fundamentally linked to the availability of a skilled workforce. One of the best ways to strengthen our workforce is to revitalize CTE programs so students can develop the practical skills that employers are consistently demanding. With the anticipated growth in numerous high-skill industries in Oregon, it is especially critical that CTE programs be enhanced to equip students to compete for high-wage jobs in these industries, like renewable energy and health care.

“This legislation makes the critical recognition that the skills that employers consistently demand for workers at all skill levels—problem-solving, creativity, analytical thinking, teamwork—can and should be taught before Oregon students leave high school,” said House Republican Leader Kevin Cameron (R-Salem).

"In recent years there has been a lot of discussion about making this type of investment. This bill is the first real step in making it happen and investing in our industry's future," said Mike Salsgiver, Executive Director of the Associated General Contractors. “This is a huge opportunity for our kids and our economy, and we’re proud to have been supporting the Commissioner’s grant program from the beginning."

CTE programs help fill the pipeline of workers that businesses need to continue or expand their operations. Restoring and enhancing CTE classes will help address current labor shortages and skill gaps in several industries – such as health care, manufacturing, construction, and high tech services – so Oregon can keep its homegrown businesses as well as attract new businesses to the state. HB 3362B also calls on the state to foster CTE partnerships with businesses, giving industry leaders an opportunity to provide valuable insight into the focus areas and skills that can most improve Oregon’s workforce.

“Oregon workers are excited to support these programs and show young people the kind of enjoyable, rewarding careers that they can access without a four-year degree,” noted John Mohlis, Executive-Secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council. “Commissioner Avakian’s and Representative Dembrow’s leadership on this issue has been invaluable.”

Additional information about HB 3362B, the importance of career technical education and the coalition of supporters can be found [here](#). The bill now moves to the full Ways and Means Committee, and then to the House and Senate floors.

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