

Thank you Chair and Members of the Education committee.

My name is Yesenia Silva Estrada and I am the Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives at Colorado Mountain College. I am testifying today on behalf of my organization in support of HB1365. Colorado Mountain College serves more than 7500 square miles of central mountain region rural communities in the State. Our college services eight counties, nine school districts in our rural region which includes 18 ski resorts that support the tourism, hospitality, and construction industry.

We are the primary and only higher education provider located in our rural region. We suffer critical shortages of trained workforce especially in trades focused on construction. We work closely with our business community to train students to be workforce ready and work closely with their feedback to provide relevant programs.

Last year, Colorado Mountain College was awarded a Planning Grant via the Opportunity Now Colorado

Grant Program to conduct a bilingual stakeholder engagement process and apply the insights to create a set of recommendations in response to industry and community needs. We are a Hispanic Serving Institution and assuring that the stakeholder engagement included the voices of our Latinx communities, especially adults in our area who are already trying to support the critical shortages of construction industry was extremely important to us.

The insights gained from this stakeholder engagement affirmed the acute shortages of talent in our central mountain region, with a specific call-out to the need for targeted interventions in this region.

Employers call for flexible scheduling and creative training options to making skilled trades education accessible to all.

There is a strong interest in skilled trades education and programming, especially from Hispanic and Latinx communities, but lack of information and

access to opportunities are significant barriers, including opportunities that honor their language skills.

Learners need flexible programming, financial support, and mentoring to access and opportunities for economic mobility.

Furthermore, the insights of this stakeholder engagement Point out the necessity for programs to evolve in response to technological advancements in the skilled trades sector, ensuring that training remains relevant and forward-looking.

Additionally, There are many local and statewide partnerships rapidly developing solutions or looking to engage; thus continuing to develop strategic partnerships will be key.

And finally and most importantly, our stakeholder engagement pointed to the critical need of a facility or a number of facilities that support regional needs and advancements in skilled trades.

We are ready to move on to the next phase of this work and are encouraged by potential funding that

can help us continue to convene stakeholders around this issue and also provide us the potential funding to break ground on much needed innovative and relevant training capacity to alleviate these shortages in our rural mountain communities.

We have thousands of students who are already living and working here and they are ready to fill the jobs that our local rural mountain business so desperately want and need to fill. HB1365 would open the opportunity for thousands of rural mountain students to access a post-secondary credential, gain the necessary education and skills to fill the jobs that our workforce providers so desperately need.

Happy to take answer any questions.

Thank you for your time.



March 2024

To: House Business Affairs and Labor Committee
Re: HB24- 1365--Opportunity Now Grants & Tax Credit

Dear Committee Members:

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. More than 700 community leaders are members of AAUW branches throughout Colorado.

AAUW has led the fight for economic empowerment for women, and we have made progress over the years. Yet women continue to lag men in both pay and opportunity. HB 1365 offers new pathways for women to succeed, both as beneficiaries of the successful Opportunity Now Grants program, and as recipients of new tax credits for improving facilities and acquiring equipment associated with workforce training programs.

For these reasons, AAUW of Colorado strongly supports House Bill 1365 and requests your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Su Ryden
AAUW Colorado Public Policy Co-Director

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American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.