

Submitter: Bree Abel
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3809

Re: Support For HB 3809 -1

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and Members of the Committee:
I am writing on behalf of myself and my community in Albany to urge you to support HB 3809, with the -1 amendment. Please "Fix the Funding" for IDAs!

In 1999 the Legislature created Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). This matched-savings program provides participants with education and individualized support to reach their financial goals, including homeownership, home repair, higher education, purchasing a vehicle, starting a business, and retirement. The state matches participants' own savings up to 5-to-1 to make their dreams a reality. Over 19,000 Oregonians have participated in this life-changing program over the past 25 years.

This program has allowed me to become completely debt free and increase my credit to over 780 by providing education for debt management. IDA matched my savings for a vehicle which allowed me to purchase reliable transportation to school. I then graduated with a bachelors degree at WOU. With this degree I began working and saving for a house, starting my final IDA savings account. By the end, I was able to purchase a home with a large down payment. None of this would of been possible without the support the IDA funding provides. Before starting the program, my children and I were reliant on TANF, food stamps, housing assistance, and OHP. Now, we are completely independent and off all services.

HB 3809 -1 is needed because the state tax credit that funds IDAs has not kept pace with inflation. While the program's tax credit revenue has been stagnant since 2009, the cost of everything that IDA participants save for has increased significantly – especially the two most common savings goals of higher education and homeownership. Each saver needs more of the program's limited funds in order to be successful. If the Legislature does not act this year, the IDA program will shrink by 50% and will enroll fewer than 500 people each year going forward.

By passing HB 3809 -1, the Legislature can "Fix the Funding" and return the IDA program to solid financial footing, ensuring that your constituents can continue reaching their goals of higher education, purchasing a home, starting a business and beyond. I urge you to pass this bill.

Sincerely,
Bree Abel