

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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March 21, 2023

Tim Robards
Staff Chief, Climate and Energy
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814 pass

Re: Black Oak Mine Unified School District Workforce Development Grant Application -
SUPPORT

Dear Mr. Robards,

El Dorado County is writing to support the Black Oak Mine Unified School District's (BOMUSD) application to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Workforce Development grant. This grant would support and expand BOMUSD's existing, well-regarded Career Technical Education program by adding functional forestry product processing equipment and providing high school students with a hands-on construction experience, thereby strengthening California's workforce in this field. From 1975-2020, BOMUSD's woodworking and construction module was designed to be preparatory for fulfilling careers in the building trades and woodworking industries and offered a "capstone" course that advanced students' construction techniques to a level immediately employable in the construction industry. Through the BOMUSD Career Technical Education program, and in partnership with the Los Rios Community College District and local businesses, BOMUSD seeks to re-launch and expand the Woodworking Program. Students will be able to advance to either post-secondary education or directly more readily into the workforce.

El Dorado County is located entirely in the Sierra Nevada, from the historic Gold Country in the western foothills to the South Lake Tahoe basin. Like other counties in the Sierra Nevada region, El Dorado County has been severely impacted by recent catastrophic fires as well as public safety power shutoff (PSPS) events. Addressing fire risk and maintaining a strong forest industry are important priorities in the County, and the BOMUSD proposed project will support these efforts. By expanding the existing BOMUSD Career Technical Education program to include construction/industrial arts education and an operational sawmill, high school students will gain invaluable experience and understanding in forestry, vegetation management, and

forest product processing, and the broader community will benefit. Additionally, this affords the district an opportunity to offer a student-centric program that integrates current research-based practices adaptive to a changing job market and localized instruction to prepare graduates for post-secondary education and high-demand, highly skilled careers in wood and forestry products. BOMUSD students will learn adaptive strategies for local economic resilience in the face of climate change: wildfire reduction strategies, alternatives to fossil fuels, and forest residual recycling.

While this project opens workforce development in forestry, vegetation management, and forest product processing, as an additional benefit, it is also a springboard for the creation of a career technical training pipeline from secondary to post-secondary education focused on renewable energy. Working with the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and Folsom Community College's Innovation Center, BOMUSD is actively developing this pathway for students who may be interested in pursuing a career in the varying aspects of this field. In the foreseeable future, it is envisioned that a biomass-to-energy unit installed at Golden Sierra High School will provide hands-on experience in renewable energy just as the sawmill proposed here does for forestry and forest product processing.

The proposed BOMUSD workforce development project will be impactful for El Dorado County. Aligning the expansion of the Woodworking Program as well as these other new offerings with the existing Automotive, Fire Science, and Engineering Programs, it is estimated that an average of 200 students per year will tangibly interact with the new on-site sawmill and ultimately the biomass generator. We strongly encourage you to award the proposal at the full requested amount.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Wendy Thomas
Chair, Board of Supervisors