



Op-Ed Submission
May 30, 2025

No better time

By Lt. Governor Scott Bedke

It's graduation season, a time of celebration, reflection and pride for both graduates and their families. I've had the privilege of speaking with some of Idaho's graduating seniors, young men and women who stand at the threshold of a new chapter in life. In every conversation, I've seen a real sense of excitement at what the future holds.

Their excitement is well founded. In Idaho, there's never been a better time to be a high school graduate. Our seniors have never had more opportunities for success. We are working hard-to open doors for them. As our state grows, we know there will be increasing demand for workers in all fields. To meet this demand, we are investing in our young people and preparing them for success.

That preparation now includes real, tangible support for students no matter what path they choose – whether that is college, career training or technical training for skilled trades that are in high demand.

These options matter because not every student is heading to a four-year university – and they shouldn't have to in order to succeed. Idaho recognizes that well-paying, meaningful work exists in all sectors. We've taken action to make sure students have real choices when planning for their future.

One of the most promising new options is the Idaho LAUNCH program, which offers up to \$8,000 to help Idaho students pay for education and training in high-demand fields. Whether a graduate wants to work in construction, technology, healthcare or manufacturing, this program provides real financial support. LAUNCH respects individual goals and helps turn them into reality, without burying families in debt. It supports trade schools, apprenticeships, certifications and other pathways that lead directly to good jobs right here in Idaho.

We also continue to support a strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) system. CTE has proven valuable for students pursuing the trades. Through CTE, students can earn dual credits for future education. In many cases, they can even earn a trade certification while still in high school, so they're ready to work the day they graduate.

Our dual-credit programs are expanding as well. These partnerships between local high schools and colleges or universities allow students to earn college credits early. Some even complete an associate degree before finishing high school. These credits transfer to any Idaho post-secondary institution, giving students flexibility if they want to pursue additional degrees.

Of course, even the best programs can never replace the lessons learned at home. As a father of four and grandfather of 16, I understand the energy, dedication, patience and persistence it takes to raise strong, grounded kids. Parents and grandparents, your role in your children's success cannot be overstated. You have taught them responsibility, resilience and character – and most importantly, the value of hard work. These values will guide them as they move into adulthood.

To the teachers and mentors who have shaped these graduates, thank you. Your commitment has made a lasting impact.

To our graduates, congratulations. I hope you take full advantage of the many opportunities our state offers. With the support of your families and the strength of Idaho's programs, you are more prepared than ever to succeed. As you move into your future filled with anticipation and promise, know that Idaho is proud of you. And we're counting on you to help us keep Idaho the best place to live, work and raise a family.