



March 19th, 2013

Caitlin Baggott, Executive Director, The Bus Project

Chair Hass; Members of the Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 2787

Chair Hass, Members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Caitlin Baggott. I am the Executive Director of the Bus Project. We work to engage young people and new people in democracy here in Oregon. We strongly urge you to support House Bill 2787, to bring Tuition Equity to Oregon and strengthen Oregon's economic future by ensuring a more educated population and keeping top achievers in our state.

This legislative session, perhaps more than any other in recent memory, we need to find ways to make Oregon as competitive as possible in the global economy. While this is unquestionably a pressing need today, its importance will continue to grow year after year. We should be planting seeds of innovation and prosperity today, so that Oregon's economy can grow more globally competitive in the coming decades.

We know that an educated workforce is one of the most critical elements of a state's business-friendliness. It both attracts companies to our state and is a vital element of successful homegrown business. The recipe is simple: an educated Oregon is a competitive Oregon.

Oregon's students are extremely talented, but many pursue education out of state, potentially leaving Oregon permanently and reducing the attractiveness of our workforce. In-state tuition is one of the most fundamental things we can offer to talented students to keep them here, an investment to improve our economy and our quality of life. Without it, talented students simply have less incentive to attend Oregon institutions.

Without question, some of these talented students do not have documentation. Many have lived here nearly their entire lives, and had no choice in how they were brought here. They are working toward citizenship and, with a good Oregon education, can be a vital part of the new innovation economy. But because we do not offer these Oregonians in-state tuition, many either attend college out of state or opt out of college entirely. This does nothing but hurt Oregon's economy, today and especially in the future.

I would call Tuition Equity a great investment, except that investments cost money. Tuition Equity does not. Tuition Equity brings money into the state. Fiscal studies have found that Tuition Equity brings tuition dollars into a state's colleges and universities. This is because students eligible for Tuition Equity are not currently paying out-of-state tuition. They are not paying tuition to Oregon at all. Many are not attending college at all. That loses our state money and leads to further brain drain when we should instead be working to educate our state to compete with the rest of the world.

Tuition Equity is not simply an issue of basic fairness – although it is certainly that. It is a vital move to keep high achievers in Oregon and ensure our competitiveness in the real world.

The Bus Project strongly urges you to support House Bill 2787. Thank you very much for taking the time to review our letter of support for Tuition Equity.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Baggott