

**Testimony to House Higher Education and Workforce Development  
Tuition Equity Hearing - February 13, 2013**

**Jim Francesconi, Director, State Board of Higher Education**

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee:

My name is Jim Francesconi. I am speaking to you today on behalf of the State Board of Higher Education.

Almost two years ago, in March, 2011, the State Board unanimously endorsed tuition equity. Since then, we have been formally aligned with the leadership of the Oregon Student Association, which has sought legislation on tuition equity for several biennia. We also commend the leadership of presidents of the Oregon public universities and Chancellor George Pernsteiner whose support for tuition equity is unequivocal.

Passage of HB 2787 will send a clear message to all of our students, including our growing population of Latino students, that if you work hard, graduate from an Oregon high school and seek a path to citizenship, we want you in our state, we want you to contribute to the economic base of the state, and we want you to pay taxes and support other Oregonians who have the same dreams and ambitions. If you do all these things, we will find a place for you in our colleges and universities and we will not hold you responsible for the actions of others.

What's different now than two years ago is President Obama's Executive Order which will allow most undocumented students who graduate from our universities, to be eligible for two-year work permits that can be renewed.

The students who would benefit from HB 2787 are Oregon high school graduates who have attended some or all of their K-12 education in Oregon. The state has already invested in their elementary and secondary education. Without the passage of this bill, Oregon will miss out on the talent and skills of these students who are a key part of the state's communities and culture, and miss out on gaining a return on investment when these students earn a higher education and are tax-paying Oregonians supporting the state that supported them.

**We are not talking about giving anything away; we are talking about setting a reasonable level of cost-sharing for our higher education system -- the same level of cost-sharing that we have set for our resident students. Even at resident tuition rates, these students will still be paying a significant amount for their education and almost twice what the state is paying for them.**

The unanimous endorsement of the State Board of Higher Education and The Oregon Idea for tuition equity included support of business and community leaders such as Allyn Ford, Roseburg Forest Products; Matt Donegan, Forest Capital Partners; Jill Eiland, Intel; Kirk Schueler, and St. Charles Health System. These business and community leaders understand that HB 2787 will contribute to a strong future work force and economy, especially as Oregon becomes more dependent upon the workforce skills and innovation of our Latino residents, citizens and community members, who are the fastest growing members of Oregon's communities.

The unanimous Board support also included and includes academic leaders and faculty members who understand that we should recognize students who have succeeded, often with distinction, in their secondary education in Oregon and encourage them to obtain a university degree. It is the right message to send to *all* of our children and our increasingly diverse communities. In our classrooms we teach equity, tolerance and opportunity for *all* people. Our policies must match those teachings.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the legislative champions of tuition equity. Representative Dembrow and former Senator Frank Morse embody the best of political leadership. We look toward the day when there will be One Oregon – neither divided by class nor by race. One Oregon with a place in her heart for every child.

Thank you. I'm happy to take any questions that you might have.