

Testimony on HB 2787

Wim Wiewel, Ph.D.

Members of the committee, for the record my name is Wim Wiewel and I am president of Portland State University.

Portland State University has a proud history of supporting tuition equity for the children of undocumented immigrants. Since I assumed the PSU presidency in 2008, I have given testimony in support of tuition equity every time it has come up in the legislature. Tuition equity is economically beneficial, morally right, and politically smart.

Tuition equity is economically beneficial to employers who are experiencing the impacts of Oregon's changing demographics. By 2025 one in four students in the K-12 system in Oregon is expected to be Hispanic and currently only 56% of Hispanic students complete high school. Without the promise of college, these numbers won't get much better. This challenges our collective efforts to meet the state's need for a more competitive workforce, the ultimate goal of the 40-40-20 plan.

Tuition equity is also the morally right thing to do. Education is the pathway to success and we are denying it by charging out of state tuition to students who may have attended every single year of K-12 in America. Students, for whom as a state and nation, we have already made significant initial investments in their future. It is a moral imperative that we capitalize on this investment by allowing students to continue their education. In this case, doing the right thing for these students also creates a competitive advantage for Oregon.

To make this concrete - the cost to attend PSU full time at in-state tuition is about \$7600 per year (assuming 12 credits per term, 3 terms per year). Taking the same exact course load, it currently costs over \$22,800 per year for an out of state student. And because these students are not eligible for federal grants or loans, affording college is virtually impossible.

If we choose not to act, we stop these students' education short of Oregon's 40-40-20 finish line and increase their likelihood of dependence on social services in the future.

Finally, tuition equity is the politically smart thing to do. We are required as states to invest in a K-12 education for all Oregon students regardless of documentation status and should require the same for higher education. If we do not, we are side-stepping our responsibility to prepare all Oregon voters to make informed decisions about their future.

As a university president, let me assure you, we want these students on our campus and in our classes. And I think the nation has finally come to see that for all of us to realize the promise of our great democracy, all of our residents need to be well educated and have a path to citizenship. It is now incumbent on each and every state legislature to act if these students are to continue on this path.

I applaud you for taking this legislation up today. Thank you for your time.