



House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Tiffany Dollar, Associated Students of Portland State University
Re: HB 2838, Pay It Forward

Good morning Chair Dembrow, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. For the record, my name is Tiffany Dollar and I am speaking today on behalf of the Oregon Student Association regarding House Bill 2838, Pay It Forward. I have the honor to serve as the Student Body President at Portland State, Oregon's largest university. I also sit on the OSA Board of Directors. The Oregon Student Association is comprised of elected student leadership from public colleges and represents over 100,000 students statewide. It is our mission to increase affordability and access to public post-secondary education for all Oregonians. It is for this reason that I am eager to talk to you today about the OSA's support for the Pay It Forward proposal.

First, I'll talk a little bit about my educational experience and why I think it's important that we explore the Pay It Forward proposal. I attended 13 in schools in three states before graduating from David Douglass High School in 2005. This included four schools in Oregon and Washington in the third grade alone, and I did not begin fifth grade until March of that academic year. Needless to say, I had an unstable childhood and faced barriers to education as a result.

I am a non-traditional, first generation, transfer student at with an Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree. I paid for the first year at PCC out of pocket while working fulltime in health care, taking just a class or two per term because I was not eligible for financial aid due to the fact that my parents did not file their taxes. Although, I waited to go back to school I was still too young to file for financial aid independently. After a year, I was able to file an appeal and apply for financial aid independently. I worked through my time at community college in order to support what my grants and loans did not cover. I am nearing the end of my Senior year at PSU, and I will be graduating with more than \$30,000 in student loan debt. Sadly, this level of debt is not unique. *The Oregonian* reported late last

year that Portland State's class of 2010 borrowed more than any other OUS institution at an average of \$26,200¹.

I've heard in this very committee how the funding ratio has flipped in the last decade shifting the burden of operating our colleges onto the backs of students who are now paying on average two-thirds of the operating costs of our institutions and the state the remainder. During tuition conversations on my campus PSU's Vice President of Finance and Administration informed students that these numbers are more extreme at PSU where students cover more than 80 percent of the budget.

It is no wonder student loan debt has outpaced credit card debt and amounts to more than one trillion dollars nationally. We need a reinvestment in postsecondary education, and Pay It Forward provides us this opportunity. Estimates show that under this model three percent of an individual's income for 24 years cover 4 years of tuition and fees and pay an additional \$7,400 (on average) to build the Oregon Higher Ed Fund. While California, Washington, Vermont, and Pennsylvania are all talking about Pay It Forward, Oregon is leading the conversation. Oregon is known for its pioneering spirit. Let's pave the way to an end to student loan debt. Please support Pay It Forward, thank you for your time; I would be happy to answer any questions.

¹ Molly Young, "College grads take on record debt, weighing down Oregon's Economy: Diminished expectations | OregonLive.com," *The Oregonian*, 5 December 2012, accessed 22 February 2013, http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2012/12/a_degree_of_desperation_dimini.html.