



Date: February 4, 2014

To: Oregon House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

Subject: Public Written Testimony - HB 4076

Chair Harker and members of the Oregon House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee:

For the record, my name is Mary Cullinan. I am the President of Southern Oregon University, and I reside in Ashland, Oregon.

I wish to provide testimony supporting the concept of HB 4076. I appreciate the intent of the legislation: to provide the smaller public universities in Oregon with a targeted opportunity to increase employment in their regions with pilot undergraduate degree programs that are designed to guarantee convenient access and predictable cost.

Southern Oregon University provides post-secondary education in a region that was very hard hit by the recent recession and has been slower than most regions to recover. Our students graduate with an average debt among the highest in the public institutions in Oregon.

SOU offers an array of innovative approaches that support the businesses and communities in our region:

- providing over 1,000 high school students each year with the opportunity to earn college credit (Advanced Southern Credit);
- shortening the time to degree with our 3-year Accelerated Baccalaureate program;
- offering an Applied Baccalaureate program for students with associate degrees in skill-based programs;
- offering on-line degrees in areas related to business and education; and
- providing a BS in Innovation and Leadership, programming for working professionals that combines credit for prior learning and experience, project-based collaborations, and flexible course delivery and scheduling.

I support the concept of providing prospective students with up-front knowledge of program costs. The degree in Innovation and Leadership, for example, would be a prime candidate for such an initiative. However, to guarantee the cost of the degree, SOU would require a commitment from the State of Oregon to cover differential costs. We cannot ask other SOU students to subsidize a “fixed-cost” program.

We at Southern Oregon University look forward to working with the sponsors of HB 4076, the committee, and the HECC in developing a partnership with the State that could make potential fixed cost programs available without increasing costs for our universities and the majority of our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to respond to questions from the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Cullinan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Cullinan

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