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February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015

To: Senate Committee on Education  
From: The Oregon Student Association, Mario Parker-Milligan, Legislative Director  
Re: Senate Bill 81

Chair Roblan, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your work to increase accessibility to a quality higher education for Oregonians. OSA applauds this committee, and specifically Senator Hass, for your leadership and dedication on this issue in particular.

While the concept of free community college is appealing for students statewide we are concerned that this policy in particular isn't the option Oregon students need. Our state is currently ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation for funding per FTE and student loan debt continues to rise to unsurmountable numbers for individuals and families. We cannot conflate this policy with the option which was recently announced by President Obama. This plan is a last dollar-in approach, whereas the President's 'free community college' concept is a first dollar-in approach; which takes into account the full cost of attending a community college; including tuition, fees, course materials, housing, food, transportation and childcare.

We encourage this committee and the HECC to further study the feasibility of the first dollar-in approach before funding a policy which will not be helping Oregon's most financially neediest of families to access a quality higher education, these same families who are actively deciding against sending their children to college for the sticker shock alone are also more likely to drop out after the first year due to lack of financial support.

We look forward to continuing this conversation and working with members to address the issue of affordability through legislative action.

Thank you for your time and apologies I couldn't be in committee today,

Mario Parker-Milligan

Legislative Director | Oregon Student Association