



Date: February 26, 2015  
To: House Education Committee  
From: Bob Brew, Executive Director, Office of Student Access & Completion  
Subject: House Bill 2847

Chair Doherty, Vice Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Sprenger, Members of the Committee;

For the record, my name is Bob Brew, and I am the Executive Director of the Office of Student Access and Completion, more commonly known as OSAC.

OSAC's mission is to help students plan and pay for college. As the student financial aid arm of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, we administer the Oregon Opportunity Grant, as well as many other state and federal education grants. We also provide administrative services to assist The Oregon Community Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation and many other smaller private donors in distributing their private scholarship money. Altogether, we distribute more than \$75 million per year to Oregon students.

While we are able to get tens of millions of dollars to students to help them afford higher education, the aid we administer only covers a small fraction of the costs they will incur. Nearly all college students will take on some level of college debt. That's why we consider financial literacy to be such a critical component of our work.

Many on this committee have heard of our ASPIRE program. The ASPIRE name is an acronym that stands for Access to Student Assistance Programs In Reach of Everyone. In the 145 sites that participate in ASPIRE, a Site Coordinator manages a team of volunteer mentors who work with students one-on-one to help them visualize their post high school options, prepare the necessary paperwork for whatever path they choose, and essentially provide whatever supports they need through the financial aid and admissions process. In the 17 year history of ASPIRE, financial literacy has grown to be an important component of our program. Mentors will review financial aid award letters with students, help them understand the components, and aid them in considering how much loan debt might be appropriate for them to consider. To broaden our reach, OSAC and ASPIRE have recently partnered with \$ALT, a non-profit organization that provides on-line financial literacy training. Their full suite of trainings are available to our ASPIRE partner-schools, and most of the tools are available for free via OSAC's website.

House Bill 2847 requires ASPIRE to provide financial aid instruction to high school students and their families, and specifically calls out instruction on the different types of loans that are available and the economic impacts of those loans. As you can imagine, the ASPIRE program for high school students is highly individualized, and each mentor tailors their input to the

needs of the individual student. For students considering post-secondary opportunities for which loans are not available or appropriate (such as apprenticeship or military service), loan counseling might not be appropriate or needed. For students considering college or university after high school, financial literacy becomes much more critical.

If the goal of HB 2847 is to get financial literacy training in the hands of our ASPIRE mentees, I believe we are already doing that well, and if the bill expands that training, it would have minimal impact on our agency, increasing a trainer position from half-time to full-time. If the goal of the bill is to expand financial literacy trainings to all students that attend ASPIRE-participating schools, we would expect a greater level of staffing impact, since our Site Coordinators are paid a fairly small stipend and their hours are limited. If the goal of the bill is to get ASPIRE into all high schools to provide financial literacy training, we would need to critically examine how we could staff this work and coordinate with schools that don't currently participate in ASPIRE.

In any case, OSAC and the HECC fully support increasing financial literacy, and specifically loan literacy for those contemplating attending college or university and those currently enrolled. We will work diligently to implement whatever legislation is passed.

Thank you for your attention, and I'll be glad to answer any questions.