

CHAIR ROBLAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE,

FOR THE RECORD MY NAME IS JEFF DENSE, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT OF THE INTERINSTITUTIONAL FACULTY SENATE (IFS). WE REPRESENT THE FACULTY OF OREGON'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES.

IFS FIRMLY BELIEVES IN THE CENTRALITY OF THE OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES OF ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY IN THE PURSUIT OF THE STATE'S AMBITIOUS 40/40/20 GOALS AND THE FUTURE OF THE STATE OF OREGON. HOWEVER, THERE ARE A SERIES OF PROBLEMATIC TECHNICAL ISSUES WITH SB81 THAT INHIBIT ITS POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS.

FIRST, THE CURRENT DRAFT OF SENATE BILL 81 DOES NOT ADDRESS THE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE COST OF STUDENT FEES AT OREGON'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. WHILE THERE ARE HECC-BASED SAFEGUARDS IN PLACE TO LIMIT ANNUAL INCREASES IN STUDENT TUITION COSTS, THERE IS NO CORRESPONDING PROCEDURE TO LIMIT INCREASES IN STUDENT FEES. WITHOUT ADDITIONAL PROTECTIVE MEASURES, STUDENT RECEIVING THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION WAIVERS UNDER SB 81 MAY IN FACT CONFRONT AN INCREASE IN THE NET PRICE OF THEIR EDUCATION. THE OMISSION OF A PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARD TO CONTROL STUDENT FEE INCREASES ADVERSELY EFFECTS THE POTENTIAL ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY BENEFITS OF SENATE BILL 81.

SECOND, THE LANGUAGE IN SENATE BILL 81, WHICH REQUIRES THE STUDENTS TO HAVE “ACCEPTED ALL STATE AND FEDERAL AID GRANTS AVAILABLE TO THE PERSON” MAY ADVERSELY IMPACT STUDENT ABILITY TO COMPLETE THEIR BACCALAUREATE DEGREE IN A TIMELY FASHION. GIVEN THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT AN INDIVIDUAL CAN RECEIVE IN FEDERAL PELL GRANT AID OVER THEIR LIFETIME, THIS PROVISIONS MAY LEAVE STUDENTS WITHOUT ADEQUATE FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES TO COMPLETE THEIR UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE. THE TERMINATION OF FINANCIAL AID SUPPORT BEFORE DEGREE COMPLETION CAN TRIGGER A VIRULENT CYCLE OF DEBT WHICH ADVERSELY IMPACTS STUDENT LIVES, ALONG WITH IMPAIRING ATTAINMENT OF THE STATE’S 40/40/20 GOALS.

FINALLY, ONE OF IFS’ GUIDING PRECEPTS IS ENSURING ACADEMIC QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN OREGON. GIVEN THE POTENTIAL FOR A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF OREGONIANS ATTENDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE DUE TO THE PROPOSED TUITION WAIVER PROVISIONS OF SB81, IFS IS CONCERNED ACADEMIC QUALITY, AS MEASURED BY CLASS SIZE AND A NUMBER OF OTHER METRICS, WILL INVARIABLY SUFFER, LEAVING STUDENTS UNDERPREPARED TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION.

IFS FIRMLY BELIEVES IN THE PRECEPTS OF ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, AND SUPPORTS THE STATE’S 40/40/20 GOALS. HOWEVER, SENATE BILL 81 MAY LEAVE THE STATE HOLDING A SIGNIFICANT, AND UNDERFUNDED, FISCAL OBLIGATION WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ADVERSELY EFFECT

ADEQUATE FUNDING LEVELS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. THE ABOVE SERIES OF POTENTIAL UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES LINKED TO SENATE BILL 81 REQUIRES A MORE COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION THAN THE 'BANDAID' OF TUITION WAIVERS AT OREGON'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, AND I WOULD BE GLAD TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.