

**PRELIMINARY STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY****CARRIER:**

Senate Committee on Education

**REVENUE: May have revenue impact, statement not yet issued****FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, statement not yet issued****Action:****Vote:****Yeas:****Nays:****Exc.:****Prepared By:** Gretchen Engbring, Administrator**Meeting Dates:** 2/24, 3/24

**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Waives tuition for persons meeting specified criteria for select community college courses. Specifies criteria required for persons to receive tuition waiver. Establishes tuition shall be waived for Oregon community college courses required for a certificate or associate degree. Specifies criteria for amount of tuition waived. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2015.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Affordability of higher education
- Tennessee and federal free community college tuition programs
- Cost of mandate to state
- Academic advising requirements
- Costs beyond tuition, including housing, food, student fees, text books and transportation
- Potential impact on community college and university enrollment
- Potential impact on low-income students

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:**

-1 amendments (proposed) modify student eligibility criteria required to receive tuition waivers. Alter payment required by student. Require Higher Education Coordinating Commission to adopt rules related to community college reimbursement and academic advising requirements.

**BACKGROUND:** Senate Bill 1524 (2014) required the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to examine the viability of a program that would allow students to attend certain Oregon community college courses without paying tuition and fees for a specified period. The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) was selected by the HECC to provide technical assistance on the topic, and produced a report on the viability of the program. During the 2013-14 interim, the Interim Committee on Education and Workforce Development held five hearings on the topic of tuition waivers at community colleges.

Tuition prices have reportedly increased 58 percent at public community colleges and 72 percent at public four-year institutions nationally over the last decade (see College Board's *Trends in College Pricing*). Some states are exploring the affordability of postsecondary education institutions and enacting laws to provide increased access to affordable opportunities. For example, Tennessee's "Promise Scholarship" program (HB 2491) allows qualifying residents to attend community colleges with their tuition waived.

Senate Bill 81 waives tuition if a person has been an Oregon resident at least 12 months prior to beginning courses, attained the highest level of education in Oregon prior to receiving a diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate, completed grade 12, accepted all state and federal aid grants available, and not earned more than 90 quarter hours or equivalent at post-secondary institution of education. Additionally, the measure provides that the amount of tuition waived will be the amount owed after subtracting applicable state and federal grants plus \$50 per course paid by the person receiving the waiver.

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***This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.***