

Seventy-Eighth Oregon Legislative Assembly - 2015 Regular Session
STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY
Senate Committee On Education

MEASURE: HB 2973 A
CARRIER: Sen. Knopp

Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

Action Date: 05/14/15

Action: Do Pass The A-Eng Bill.

Meeting Dates: 05/12, 05/14

Vote:

Yeas: 6 - Baertschiger Jr, Gelser, Hass, Knopp, Kruse, Roblan

Exc: 1 - Beyer

Prepared By: Gretchen Engbring, Committee Administrator

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Affordable Baccalaureate Degree Act. Directs public universities and community colleges to work toward providing four-year affordable, fixed-cost baccalaureate degrees, or pathways to baccalaureate degrees. Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to analyze available options for affordable degrees and report findings to 2016 Legislative Assembly. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Importance of offering accessible, affordable baccalaureate degree pathways and programs to reach Oregon's education goals
- Examples of \$10,000 or low-cost degree programs offered or proposed in other states, including Texas, Florida, and California
- Relationship to other legislation on similar topics, such as SB 81 (2015), which proposes free community college tuition under specified conditions

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

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, including low or fixed-cost degree programs, in the belief that increasing attendance costs are preventing many potential students from pursuing higher education.

House Bill 2973-A directs public universities, community colleges and HECC to investigate the possibility of creating such programs in Oregon. The measure requires that affordable four-year baccalaureate degree programs developed must meet the same educational and accreditation standards as other baccalaureate degree programs offered by universities, and must be capable of being approved by the governing boards of universities and by HECC.