



To: The Senate Education Committee

February 1st, 2016

Remarks Concerning LC 75 – Math-Related Higher Education Tuition Waiver

LC 75 considers “...conducting an evaluation on providing a tuition waiver for mathematics majors at community colleges and public universities listed in ORS 352.002.” There are three areas that this evaluation should address: 1) cost, 2) potential job creation, and 3) feasibility of implementation.

My perspective on this bill comes from my position as Director of the Northwest Economic Research Center (NERC) and an educator for over 30 years. In hiring people at NERC and students I have helped find employment, the skill set that is most successful is “Applied Math”. I place this in quotes, for Applied Math means more than solving equations. It is the ability to use the tool box of math to help answer and communicate solutions to private and social problems. I would recommend that the tuition waiver have for “math” have this in mind. Mathematics is a wonderful discipline, but for the vast majority of our students, it will have greater value in applying mathematics to various fields, be that accounting, economics, engineering, chemistry, to name just a few. Perhaps we should be closer to the STEAM concept in considering a tuition waiver.

If the present bill stays as is, then 1) cost and 3) feasibility should not be terribly difficult to address. But 2) potential job creation is much more difficult. Does one only follow terminal degree math majors at either the community college 2 yr degree or university 4 yr degree, or these students that move on to other majors where their mathematics degree is applied in a different discipline?

The incentive to promote more students to attain competency in mathematics is a desirable goal. I would prefer to see the incentive extended to students to apply that mathematics in many of the occupations which we dearly need in this state, which besides the traditional areas of business and engineering, also includes government policy analysis and yes, even the Arts.

Sincerely,

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