



Testimony on House Bill 2311
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
April 6, 2017

Chair Reardon, Vice-Chairs Alonso León and Whisnant, and members of the Committee. My name is Ben Cannon and I am the Executive Director of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2311.

This bill, proposed by the HECC, centers the focus of the state's 40-40-20 attainment goal on the population of younger Oregonians currently in the educational pipeline and requires the Commission, together with the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), to work together to develop attainment goals for adult Oregonians not currently in the educational pipeline. These new goals will take into account current and projected job opportunities for Oregonians, and will be designed to promote success in the labor market. I hope you will support these changes.

The 40-40-20 target, if the current statute is read literally, would imply that the goal of the state is to push adult Oregonians back into the high school and higher education pipeline, *en masse*, in an attempt to make the math work. That is not the case, and it has never been the case. By making the calculation prospective and focusing on the subset of Oregonians currently in the education pipeline, we are recognizing in statute what we at the Commission believe has been the purpose of 40-40-20 goal since its initial codification: to make targeted improvements in the P-20 system that improve educational outcomes for today's learners, and that will lead to a population ready and able to participate in tomorrow's economy and civic life.

That is not to say that we are disinterested in educational outcomes for mid-career Oregonians. We are committed to enhancing those outcomes, and this legislation clarifies that commitment by requiring the creation of a set of goals for this population that are more in line with their career trajectories, workforce development needs, and educational interests than the 40-40-20 goal could ever be. Through collaboration between HECC and OWIB, in conjunction with input from the institutions that serve this population, we will work to ensure that returning workers are welcomed and provided the opportunity to succeed in the educational opportunities they seek.

This concludes my comments on the bill, and as background, I would like to provide a little more information on the development of the 40-40-20 goal and its importance to the Oregon higher education system.

The goal, adopted in 2011, and inextricably woven in to the HECC strategic plan adopted in 2016, serves as the single, clearest target for state policymakers as they consider modifications to higher education policy in this state. In considering the targets of 40-40-20, policymakers and stakeholders recognized multiple considerations:

- The two groups of 40% are roughly aligned with the rates of the highest attaining states in the country
- Having 80% of adult Oregonians with a post-secondary credential leads to job growth and income increases beyond which are possible in a lower-attainment state
- Goals for long term attainment should account for anticipated future economic trends and conditions

Twenty-nine states, as of September 2016, have higher education attainment goals that are intended to increase adult attainment and address workforce conditions in the state. More than just a tagline for policymakers, these goals drive higher education planning, lead to the development of data systems to account for student progress, and focus budgets on areas needing improvement. The number of states with targeted goals is growing, as states grapple with scarce resources and an increasingly interstate and global competitive marketplace for jobs and opportunities for residents.

The HECC strategic plan and actions around college and university funding, student pathways, student support, affordability, and economic and community impact are outcomes focused. In fact, in the next biennium, state funding at the university level continues a steady shift toward a model that awards institutions for their ability to complete, not simply enroll, students.

The 40-40-20 goal makes explicit the notion the state should undertake significant efforts that will enhance post-secondary educational opportunities for all Oregonians—and it goes even further by implying that:

- The state must undertake every feasible effort it can to ensure that more students enroll in a post-secondary experience;
- Students that do enroll enter programs with clear pathways that are direct and directly applicable to their career and academic aspirations;
- Students are supported enough financially and academically such that the problem of student persistence is decreased;
- The pipeline is filled with credentials that are coherent and stackable, so that students can move up the 40-40-20 ladder while also experiencing the benefits at each rung; and,
- The state can measure all of these outcomes and effects to understand the positive and negative effects of state policy decisions on progress toward the 40-40-20 goal, which is representative of and a proxy for advancement and success for individual Oregonians

Thank you for your time today, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.