

HB 2488 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

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Meeting Dates: 2/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to adopt rules prioritizing award of Oregon Promise program grants to persons serving in Oregon National Guard who have completed initial active duty training. Exempts qualifying members of the Oregon National Guard from compliance with requirement that the applicant attained highest level of prior education within six months of the date that the applicant enrolls in community college courses, in order to be awarded grant. Establishes that grant awards become operational in 2018-2019 academic year. .

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Promise law (ORS 341.522) states that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission may adopt by rule the priority by which grants are awarded.

The Oregon National Guard consists of the Oregon Army National Guard and Oregon Air National Guard, and is charged with supporting the Oregon Governor during unrest or natural disaster. It is also a reserve force to the United States Air Force and United States Army. Oregon National Guard members typically complete initial active duty training in approximately 14 weeks, prior to serving in various capacities.

Oregon National Guard members are sometimes unable to access full financial aid packages for post-secondary tuition, fees and other expenses, particularly if members have not completed active duty. The federal post-9/11 GI Bill is a well-known, robust education benefit program for individuals who served on active duty since September 11, 2001. The Voyager Tuition Assistance program is a “last dollar award” state program for Oregon National Guard members who served in an active duty capacity in a combat zone since September 11, 2001. For a typical non-active reserve or national guard soldier, annual education benefits are limited to the Montgomery GI bill (up to \$4,428 per year) and the Federal Tuition Assistance program (up to \$4,500 per year). The Oregon Department of Veteran Affairs reports that most members never receive the \$8,928 total due to breaks in schooling and funding availability.