



## **Testimony on House Bill 4056**

House Judiciary Committee

February 5, 2018

Chair Barker, Vice-Chairs Olson and Williamson, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 4056.

Currently, HECC is responsible for administering a scholarship program for the eligible dependents of public safety officials that are killed or disabled in the line of duty. Over the course of past nine academic years, HECC has provided over \$400,000 in financial assistance to students that met the criteria for the scholarship program. But, while HECC administers the program, there has never been a dedicated source of funding provided for these grants, and the Commission awards grant recipients out of funding that is otherwise dedicated to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, the state's need-based grant program serving low income Oregonians.

By identifying a funding source, this bill ensures a perpetual awarding of the grant, while allowing Oregon Opportunity Grant funds to be retained for their original purpose.

There is one item in the bill that is ambiguous to the Commission. The language makes unclear whether or not a student that has earned a certificate or an associates degree continues to qualify for the grant. This may prevent a student from stacking their credentials on top of one another, or from transferring from a community college to a university after completing an initial certificate or degree.

In addition to providing a funding source, the bill, with the proposed -1 amendment makes modifications to the current program, including:

- Eliminating eligibility for dependents other than dependent children of a qualifying officer
- Eliminating eligibility for post-graduate studies
- Requires a student to file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid and accept grant aid that the student is qualified for (which may have the effect of reducing the cost of the program)
- Expands the institutions a student may attend and access the grant to include out of state institutions

As a result of these changes, the Commission may incur a minimal administrative impact in restructuring materials and in increased interface with students, but this effect is mitigated due to the fact the program serves approximately 10 or fewer students per academic year.

Thank you for your time today.