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Oregon State House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness  
Via e-mail to: [hvet.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hvet.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

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Chair Evans, Vice Chairs Boone and Esquivel, and Distinguished Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness:

I write to you in support of House Bill 4040. I am a 23-year veteran of the military, active and reserve, including deployments to Bosnia, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan, where I received a Bronze Star for my service in support of Afghanistan's justice sector. I started my career as an enlisted member of the Oregon Army National Guard in 1994, while I was working my way through school. I eventually earned my commission and transferred to the active duty Air Force after completing law school. I eventually transitioned back to reserve service and currently serve as a Colonel in the Oregon Air National Guard as a judge advocate. My testimony today is in my personal capacity and not on behalf of the Oregon Military Department or the Air Force.

As an officer, one of my important jobs is providing advice regarding benefits and connecting servicemembers to opportunities to further their education. We are blessed with a variety of benefits, including college financing through a patchwork of various programs. Servicemembers who serve three years or more on active duty now have access to the Post-9/11 GI bill, but those who have not served on active duty often have much more limited benefits.

For instance, when I started my career in the Army National Guard, as a non-prior service enlistee, I received only Chapter 1606 benefits, which were around \$200 per month at the time. Those benefits have increased a bit, but still cap out at \$375 per month. When added to drill pay, those benefits help, but not enough to both go to school and pay living expenses. Other scholarships exist, but many have definitions of the term "veteran" that preclude many in our enlisted force from applying. In the absence of a program to patch up the holes in the system, veterans can graduate with too much debt to consider further service to their country.

House Bill 4040 provides a modest fund to help veterans get that "last mile" or last dollar of funding. By providing a volunteer oversight board, the bill allows a degree of discretion to use the funds in the manner most likely to promote student success. The bill also takes steps to ensure that the costs of administration are modest and do not eclipse the value to veterans by allowing the committee to meet remotely. In short, House Bill 4040 is an important step in developing our enlisted force and ensuring that our veterans can complete a college education. Thank you for your support of HB 4040.

Sincerely,



Marshall L. Wilde