



House Bill 4035: Tuition assistance for Oregon National Guard

Testimony for the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development 2.6.2018

House Bill 4035 Requires Higher Education Coordinating Commission to provide full tuition assistance for qualified members of Oregon National Guard to attend community colleges or public universities.

We can all agree that additional funding for higher education is one of the best economic investments we can make. That is what House Bill 4035 is all about, by requiring the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to provide tuition assistance for qualified 7,500 members of Oregon National Guard to attend community colleges or public universities.

However, **is it money well spent** when there are already 20 federal higher education programs offered to National Army and Air Guard personnel. Their website points out “There are many resources available to help National Guard soldiers and airmen on the federal level to fund their college education in the form of loans, grants, work-study programs or scholarships—or a combination—that can significantly reduce your tuition and other costs.”

Is it money well spent when current Oregon university and community college funding is at 86% and 104% of our 2000 funding levels, respectively? Shouldn't we consider the impact on all students when diverting funding, particularly when these same Guard soldiers can participate in Oregon's need based funding?

Is it money well spent when neighboring states rely solely on the federal programs to help fund National Guard soldiers and airmen higher education? What excess funding resources does Oregon have in its budget that California, Washington, and Idaho don't have?

And **is it money well spent** when we substitute dollar-for-dollar existing federal funded programs with state funds where our balanced budget process is difficult enough.

We are all for higher education, including for the military and the Guard. However, why divert crucial state funding when successful federal programs already exist?

We read the bills and follow the money