



Testimony on House Bill 4035
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
February 6, 2018

Chair Reardon, Vice-Chairs Alonso Leon and Whisnant, 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. Juan Baez-Arevalo, who is the Director of the Office of Student Access and Completion, joins me here today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 4035.

The agency has met with Representative McLane's office and appreciate his desire to expand state financial aid to a new category of students, and we wanted to highlight a couple of technical and policy items that you may wish to consider, and offer the opportunity to answer any questions you might have.

First, as currently drafted, the bill appears to require HECC to provide 100 percent of resident tuition charges in addition to the awarding of any other state and federal aid for which the guard member is eligible. This may result in a student being awarded above their actual cost of attendance, which would result in state resources supplanting federal aid due to federal regulations regarding allowable costs.

Second, the bill does not currently authorize HECC to award National Guard members from any particular category of state appropriations, nor does it provide for a new state appropriation. Without either authority to utilize current resources or an identified new funding stream, HECC would not be able to award students. If HECC is to utilize current financial aid resources, this bill could result in a significant reduction in either Oregon Opportunity Grant or Oregon Promise awards because the value of the purposed tuition assistance is significantly greater than the value of either grant, and the pool of potentially eligible guard members is large.

Finally, awarding community college attendees for up to 70 credit hours and university students for up to 120 credit hours as the bill does would not provide assistance for the duration of the typical program (either 90 or 180 credits), and may result in an increase in HECC administrative costs due to the need to track student credit hours.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony.