

HB 4043 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 2/19

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires Oregon community colleges to conduct a joint study to determine best methods for helping community college students learn about and apply for state or federal benefits. Requires the community colleges to convene study group, including but not limited to, representatives from the Office of the Governor, the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, and an agency that provides benefits. Requires the community colleges to submit a report detailing the study findings to the interim legislative committees on higher education by February 1, 2019. Sunsets the study group on January 2, 2020. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Barriers to postsecondary completion, including housing, childcare, food, and healthcare needs
- Status of community college student access to benefits
- Integration of federal benefits through institutional, agency, and community partnerships

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Many community college students experience basic needs insecurity. Nationally, approximately 14 percent of community college students are homeless, 50 percent are housing insecure, and 67 percent experience food insecurity, according to the 2017 Wisconsin HOPE Lab study. The Oregon Community College Association reports that these types of significant life challenges often impede academic persistence and completion in Oregon.

Access to public benefits such as food, cash, housing, energy, and transportation assistance, subsidized health insurance, and child care support, is currently limited on Oregon's community college campuses. Many students who are eligible for these benefits are unaware that they qualify or do not know how to apply. For those students who are aware of their eligibility, many report confusion when attempting to navigate federal, state, and local benefits, or face social or cultural barriers to receiving assistance.

House Bill 4043 A would require community colleges to investigate best practices for integration of benefits and ensuring student access to available financial supports.