

FROM THE DESK OF:
Representative Pam Marsh
House District 05 Pam Marsh

Mrs. Speaker and members of the legislature, my name is Brian Josephson and I am a senior at South Medford High School. Through my school I had the opportunity to take many of the courses described in House Bill 4053 and am writing in support of this legislation.

I began my high school career four years ago at South Medford High School, and from the start there were college credit offerings available to students who sought them. Throughout my time in high school I will attain 75 college credits simply by taking classes at my high school. These credits will help give me a leg up on my peers who did not take as many classes as I did. This will be immensely beneficial as I receive full Pell Grant, and any way to decrease the cost of attending college will improve my future financial health.

I found as I applied to college different colleges had vastly different policies in credit transfer. These policies were not just private versus public, in state or out of state, but I found that each public university in the State of Oregon had different credit transfer policies. I will use the advanced placement credit transfer policies of the University of Oregon, and Oregon State University as examples. Take my AP Statistics credit. At the University of Oregon students receive math 243 credit with a satisfactory score on this exam. Meanwhile, at Oregon State students receive statistics 201. These may not sound different at first, but math 243 fulfills a graduation requirement at the University of Oregon, meanwhile statistics 201 may be used as an elective credit at Oregon State University. Another striking difference can be seen in the Spanish Literature and Culture AP exam. Both major universities accept the credit; however, at the UO the credit transfers as a 300-level class while at OSU it is an upper 200-level class. This discrepancy means that students at one university fulfill upper level requirements in a Spanish degree, while the other students at a different university in the same state do not.

The problem goes beyond just which exam transfers for whichever credit, but also how credit even transfers. Credit transfer policies vary based on school and type of credit. For example, after completing five years of Spanish a student at my high school may take a test of oral and written proficiency. If the student shows sufficient competency, they are awarded 20 pass graded credits from Southern Oregon University, a public university in Oregon. If one wishes to send these credits, which I will reiterate originate in the Oregon university system, to Oregon State University they may not be applied to requirements for Spanish majors, or minors. At the University of Oregon these credits may or may not transfer. To be quite honest, I have searched the website rigorously (I will be attending the University of Oregon this coming fall) and I have yet to find policies regarding pass, no pass credit from a state run four-year university.

My previous sentence hits on what I view to be the greatest barrier to student use of credits earned while they are in high school, uncertainty. With almost everything students do throughout high school there is an adult who can help them, whether that's a college planning staff member, or a counselor of some variety. These school community members thrive in this world. They know FAFSA opens October 1, and closes March 1. They know college deadlines, and these advisors know about scholarships.

However, when asked about credit policies, they are as in the dark as students. This is to no fault of their own. There are seven public four-year universities, and 17 two-year community colleges in Oregon, each with their own credit policies.

Exploring how credit policies differ is a meaningful step toward erasing the unknown variable in Oregon's transition from high school to college. If students like me can take advantage of credits in a way they know will benefit them, they will. And when students take advantage of anything to give them a leg up, Oregon students move toward a more verdant future.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony, and I urge a yes vote on House Bill 4053.