

HB 4035 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development

Action Date: 02/13/18

Action: Do pass with amendments
and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference. (Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 9-0-0-0

Yeas: 9 - Alonso Leon, Bynum, Clem, Heard, Noble, Reardon, Reschke, Sollman, Whisnant

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to provide full resident tuition assistance at community colleges and public universities for qualifying members of the Oregon National Guard (Guard). Allows for 100 percent resident tuition coverage to be derived from both tuition assistance under this bill, as well as any other scholarships or financial assistance received by the student. Requires the HECC to provide tuition assistance for up to 90 credit hours at a community college or 180 hours at a public university. Specifies that qualified Guard members are students who have not yet achieved a baccalaureate or higher degree, have a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher in a community college associate degree granting program or public university baccalaureate degree granting program, and have completed Guard basic training. Provides a blank General Fund appropriation to the HECC to be expended for tuition assistance for the biennium beginning July 1, 2017. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Tuition assistance as a tool for Oregon Army and Air National Guard recruitment
- Oregon is the only state in the United States not to offer National Guard tuition assistance
- Review of Oregon National Guard mission and function

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Changes limit for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to provide tuition assistance to qualified students up to 90 rather than 70 credit hours at a community college, and 180 rather than 120 credit hours at a public university. Allows for 100 percent resident tuition coverage to be derived from both tuition assistance under this bill, as well as any other scholarships or financial assistance received by the student. Provides a blank General Fund appropriation to the HECC to be expended for tuition assistance for the biennium beginning July 1, 2017. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon National Guard (Guard) consists of the Oregon Army National Guard and Oregon Air National Guard, and is charged with supporting the governor during unrest or natural disaster. It is also a reserve force to the United States Air Force and United States Army.

Currently, members of the Guard receive certain educational benefits and scholarships through the federal government. The most common federal benefit programs include the Post-9/11 and Montgomery GI bills, though Guard members do not always qualify for benefits based on requirements such as deployment duration, or receive benefits that do not cover all education expenses.

Oregon does not currently offer state tuition assistance or other educational benefits to Guard members. Statutory language for a tuition waiver program exists under ORS 399.275; the program is managed by the Oregon Military

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Department who may contract with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to disburse tuition waiver moneys. However, the program has not been funded in recent years.

House Bill 4035 A would require the HECC to provide full resident tuition assistance at community colleges and public universities for qualifying members of the Guard.