



**Testimony on House Bill 2817**  
 House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness  
 February 28, 2019

Chair Evans, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Meek, 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 (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2817. The measure adds qualifying private institutions to the Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program.

The Oregon National Guard State Tuition Assistance (ONGSTA) program was established under HB 4035 (2017) to provide tuition assistance for eligible Oregon National Guard Members at Oregon public universities and community colleges. Students must first exhaust any other state or federal aid as this is a “last dollar” program. The HECC Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) administers this program.

This program became available to Oregon National Guard members beginning the 2018 fall term. The below table shows current award data.

	<b>2018 Fall Term</b>	<b>2019 Winter Term</b>
<b>Applicants</b>	205	230
<b>Qualified Applicants</b>	134	170
<b>Awarded Applicants</b>	81	75 (projected)
<b>Dollars Awarded</b>	\$122,508	\$95,500 (projected)
<b>Award Average</b>	\$1,512	\$1,273 (projected)

For the upcoming spring term, there are currently 165 applicants as of February 27, 2019. OSAC will be accepting applications until the deadline of March 1, 2019. In comparison to previous terms, OSAC is anticipating 50 to 60 additional applications for the spring term.

For the spring term, the number of applicants awarded is anticipated to increase because several schools are implementing a degree audit verification process to ensure an accurate maximum credit count.

Feedback from Oregon National Guard Members has been enthusiastic and positive. Several members have emphasized that with the ONGSTA program being available, that this influenced their decision to start or continue their education because of the affordability.

The HECC proposed two changes to the measure, which are contained in the -1 amendment. First, HECC requests adding the Oregon Health and Science University to the list of eligible public institutions. Second, we request that the committee include certain certificates in addition to degree programs at all eligible institutions. These amendments each provide additional opportunities for ONG members to further their education.

Addressing the fiscal impact of the original measure, the projected increase of student enrollment will be approximately 30-40 students, which will increase the award amount by an estimated \$40,000 per academic term. For the proposed amendments the additional projected enrollment would be an additional 20-30 students with additional estimated awarding of \$15,000 per academic term. This lower additional cost for certificate students is based on lower tuition rates for Oregon community colleges where the certificate programs would be provided.

Thank you for your time today.