

SB 158 -2 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 3/13, 4/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to develop and implement pilot program for Foster Youth Promise students in transition from community college to public university. Defines Foster Youth Promise Student as a student enrolled in an Oregon community college or public university who is entitled to a waiver of all tuition and fees. Requires implementation of pilot program and mentorship programs in colleges and universities currently running programs for Foster Youth Promise students. Establishes program and reporting requirements. Directs HECC to analyze and coordinate existing support programs for Foster Youth Promise students. Requires HECC to provide additional financial support to Foster Youth Promise students through private fund-raising efforts. Authorizes Oregon lottery bonds to finance programs. Establishes Foster Youth Promise Support Fund separately from General Fund. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Foster youth's low rate of college attendance
- Success of peer support
- Issues with transferring from community college to universities
- Universities that already have centers for foster youth ease the transition

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-2 Requires HECC to collaborate with community colleges and public universities to implement the pilot program. Removes provisions related to issuance of lottery bonds. Allocates funds from the Administrative Services Economic Development Fund to the Foster Youth Promise Support Program Fund.

BACKGROUND:

House Bill 3471 (2011) provided current and former foster youth under the age of 25 with a tuition and fee waiver. This waiver applies to all Oregon public 2- or 4-year higher education institutions. Eligibility requirements include spending at least 180 days in the system before the age of 16. Additionally, recipients must perform 30 hours of community service annually. During the 2016-2017 school year, 51 Oregon foster youth used the waiver. Of the 51, 8 attended community colleges and 43 attended public universities. The tuition waiver is currently only awarded to students whose financial needs are not fully met through other funding programs. HECC does not track foster youth enrollment; however, as of the 2018-2019 academic year, 192 Oregon foster youth participated in the federal John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, Educational and Training Vouchers Program for Youths Aging Out of Foster Care, which awards up to \$5,000 per academic year. Of the 192 students, 170 attended public in-state institutions.

In 2018, 11,645 children in Oregon spent at least 1 day in the foster care system. Through the year, an average of 7,831 children are in foster care daily, and 830 children in foster care are over the age of 18. The Department of Human Services (DHS) reports that 2,313 youth ages 13-17 were in foster care at some time during 2017. The Oregon Department of Education reports a 35 percent high-school graduation rate for foster youth. Senate Bill 158 establishes a pilot project to assist foster youth with college transitions.