

HB 2571 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 5/8, 5/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Permits current or former foster child under the age of 25 to receive tuition and fee waivers at institution of higher education if enrolled in courses totaling one or more credit hours for purposes of pursuing an initial undergraduate degree. Applies to tuition and fee waivers granted for the 2019-2020 academic year. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History of tuition and fee waivers for foster youth
- Removing barriers to accessing the tuition and fee waivers
- Challenges with foster youth obtaining a college degree
- Former foster care youth's need to work and provide child care while in college

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon foster care children range in age from birth to 21 years old. In 2018, 11,445 children in Oregon spent at least one day in foster care, including family foster care, professional treatment programs, psychiatric residential treatment, pre-adoptive placements, developmental disability placements, and independent living. Of these, 2,291 foster children were between the ages of 13 and 17. In 2011, the legislature passed House Bill 3471, which provided current and former foster child under the age of 25 with a tuition and fee waiver. A former foster child is defined as an individual who, for a total of six or more months while between 14 and 21 years old, was a ward of the court and in the legal custody of the Department of Human Services, or an Indian child subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act and under the jurisdiction of a tribal court, for out-of-home placement and not dismissed from care before reaching 16 years of age. The tuition waiver applies to community colleges, public universities, and the Oregon Health and Science University. To qualify, a current or former foster child must be under the age of 25 and must submit an application for federal financial aid. The recipient is eligible to receive waivers of up to the equivalent of four years of undergraduate education. The amount of the tuition waiver may be reduced by the amount of the student's other state or federal financial aid. During the 2016-2017 school year, 51 Oregon foster youth used the waiver. Of the 51, eight foster youth attended community colleges and 43 attended public universities. Current law requires tuition and fees to be waived for an eligible former foster child who "enrolls in" an institution of higher education, but the statute does not define what is considered enrolling in an institution. House Bill 2571 clarifies that a former foster child who is enrolled in one or more credit hours is eligible to receive a tuition waiver.