

HB 3015 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 5/8, 5/20

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Permits an adopted former foster child under the age of 25 to receive tuition and fee waivers if attending an Oregon institution of higher education as an undergraduate student. Defines adopted former foster child as an individual who, for six months or more, was a ward of the court and in the legal custody of Department of Humans 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 prior to becoming an adopted child. Applies to foster children adopted on or after January 1, 2012. Declares that an institution of higher education is not required to reimburse an adopted former foster child for tuition or fees previously paid to the institution. First applies to the 2019-2020 academic year. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History of foster care children and tuition waiver
- Differences between "aging out" of system and being adopted
- Unintended consequences of creating disincentives to adopting foster children
- Shortages of foster families
- Choosing between a permanent adoptive family and the opportunity for a tuition waiver
- Removing barriers to adoption
- Scope of the bill's provisions

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In Oregon, children in foster care range in age from birth to 21 years old. In 2018, 11,445 children in Oregon spent at least one day in the foster care system. In the same year, 666 children in foster care were adopted in Oregon. Most adoptive families have a previous connection with the child prior to adoption. In 2017, 94.9 percent of the 673 children adopted were adopted by relatives or foster parents. In 2011, the legislature passed House Bill 3471, which provided current and former foster youth under the age of 25 with a tuition and fee waiver. This 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. House Bill 3015 A extends this tuition and fee waiver to adopted former foster children who became an adopted child on or after January 1, 2012.