

HB 4160 Testimony

Hello Chair Doherty and members of the education committee. My name is Thomas Capps, a student at Portland Community College. Like many other people, I've had to deal with the transition into higher education under less than favorable circumstances.

I went straight into the Marine Corps one month after graduating high school and served for five years. Personally, I had never even planned on going to college, but after discovering that I had a heart defect, I was no longer qualified to serve. I had to undergo open heart surgery. I had a three month recovery time, I couldn't work or pay my bills. During this time, I really had to reflect on what I wanted to do with my future.

It was a very difficult decision for me, because up until this point, between what I did in service and what I did as a trade job, my body was my main tool. Now, that "tool" is extremely vulnerable due to the medication that I have to take. Taking that into consideration, I had to think about what I could do with my life in order to still be able to fight for, or serve people, but without doing so in a very physical way.

This is where I know that I differ from a lot of other people. The military was my first choice because of how I wanted to serve people. However for some, it's their only choice. HB 4160 is about prioritizing guidance and help for all students. Especially those who haven't had a traditional path to college. I have big dreams, I want to be a lawyer, I want to serve those who don't have a voice. I ask you to vote yes on HB 4160 because I hope that it will give others the opportunity to have a different first choice.