



**Testimony on Senate Bill 1605**  
Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020  
June 25, 2020

Chairs Courtney and Kotek, Vice-Chairs Girod and Drazan, 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 SB 1605. This testimony pertains only to Section 1 of the Bill.

As currently constituted, the Oregon Promise program requires applicants to have completed their high school diploma or equivalent credential while in the State of Oregon. It also requires students to enroll in an Oregon community college within 6 months of receiving that diploma or credential. This bill recognizes that there are situations where meeting these requirements is both not possible and not the fault of the student. If passed, this bill opens the Promise program to foster students placed by DHS outside of the state, and provides leniency for these students in meeting initial program deadlines. These changes provide a small additional number of Oregon foster students with an equitable opportunity to participate in this important financial aid program.

This change does add some administrative complexity to the Promise program. While the specific changes proposed in this bill have a minimal impact, since the inception of the Promise, several waivers and special circumstance exception provisions have been added to the program. There are legitimate reasons for the addition of those provisions. However, these changes make the program more complex, especially in light of the technical limitations of our legacy financial aid information system. In light of those limitations and the number of changes that have been made, the Commission will likely need to engage in the near future on the issue of program staffing and financial aid information technology to right-size our ability to meet these increasing demands.

Thank you for your time today.