



**Testimony on House Bill 2721**  
House Human Services Committee  
March 8, 2021

Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, 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). HECC is the state agency with responsibility over academic policy coordination, student financial aid, higher education institutional funding, and a number of other higher education and workforce initiatives in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2721.

HB 2721 has the appearance, in Section 1(1)(b), of restricting the use of the tax credit for dependent care expenses to use by individuals seeking a degree or seeking employment. Under current law, the credit is available to those attending school, regardless of their degree seeking status.

Community colleges and private institutions in Oregon offer myriad programs that are not degree programs, but allow participating students to qualify for jobs in competitive and stable fields. For example, Oregon Community colleges offer certificates that qualify individuals to maintain aircraft, work in computer programming, be industrial machinists, or conduct medical billing. These opportunities produce value for students and employers.

If this bill passes, the cost to participants with dependents to engage in these programs may increase because the corresponding tax credit may no longer be available. In preparation for this hearing, HECC reached out to the bill sponsor, and Rep. Zika indicated an amendment may be drafted to clarify that the credit is not restricted to degree programs. Such an amendment would have the effect of providing additional assistance to students pursuing certificates in line with the state's higher education needs and goals.

Thank you for your time today.