

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is being provided in support of the proposed amended eligibility requirements for the Oregon Promise Grant (OPG).

The HECC's Oregon Promise 2020 Report research brief articulates what community colleges across that state know after five years of experience with OPG: that the OPG helps make college more affordable for students; that this well-intentioned grant program has not increased college-going in a sustainable way in our state; and that more than half of students who receive the OPG are lower-income, but nearly 80% of program dollars go to students with higher incomes.

By redesigning the Oregon Opportunity Grant and OPG financial aid programs and increasing funding to the requested levels as proposed, students with the greatest financial need will receive the greatest level of state support. When combined with federal aid, eligible students would receive aid in excess of tuition and fee costs at public institutions, meaning aid would be available for other items affecting the cost of attendance such as books, transportation, food, and housing. This approach is designed to reduce financial barriers that lead to lack of persistence amongst low-income students and improve graduation rates. At Chemeketa Community College, 65% of students are housing insecure, food insecurity, or houseless. These rates are in keeping with the basic needs insecurity experienced by community college students throughout Oregon.

Particular components of the redesign proposed in HB 2093 that I believe would make a positive difference for postsecondary students in Oregon, particularly those who are the most vulnerable, are:

- Removing the \$50 co-pay for students
- Double the minimum award amount
- Changing the GPA requirement from 2.50 to 2.00
- No longer counting credits earned in high school against program credit limits

Thank you for your consideration. I welcome the opportunity to continue to provide my support for the amended eligibility requirements for the OPG.

Respectfully submitted,
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