



Oregon Community College Association
260 13th Street NE, Salem, OR 97301
Phone: (503) 399-9912
<http://www.occa17.com>

OCCA TESMINOTY ON HB 2093

Chair Alonso Leon, Members of the Committee, for the record, I'm John Wykoff, Deputy Director for the Oregon Community College Association. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on HB 2093.

I would like to begin by thanking the Higher Education Coordinating Commission Office of Access and Completion for their work trying to better focus the Oregon Promise around under-served, low-income students. We believe many of the changes before you today will bring greater equity to the Oregon Promise and better serve Oregon students than the program in its current configuration.

OCCA supports changing the current GPA requirement from 2.5 to 2.0 and have supported removing the GPA as a requirement altogether. Programs such as the federal Pell Grant and Oregon Opportunity Grant provide aid to any student admitted to an eligible institution, and then require that a student maintain satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving aid. We believe the Promise should be consistent with other aid programs in this way.

Further, we support removing the current \$50 per-term co-pay per as well as increasing the minimum award level and allowing the amount to increase over time as tuition increases. The original idea behind the co-pay was to ensure students who received the award has some "skin in the game". Students already bare significant and multiple additional costs related to post-secondary education beyond the cost of tuition. They also invest their time and effort. They already have a lot of "skin" in the day.

Colleges also agree that students should not be penalized for college credits they have taken while in high school, which currently reduce the award eligibility.

One of the other significant changes to the Oregon Promise would extend the program to public and private non-profit 4-year institutions. While we would not oppose this extension in principle, we are concerned that this will make the Oregon Promise another state financial program that is not funded to award all eligible students.

Like the Oregon Opportunity Grant, many eligible students will not receive an award. With the Opportunity Grant, community college students, who often enroll throughout the academic year, often find that they are eligible yet do not receive an award. This is because the funds are already exhausted by students applying on a traditional academic calendar beginning in the fall. If we cannot secure greater and more stable funding for state financial aid, Oregon may have two aid programs that are not fully funded and turn away otherwise eligible students.