



Testimony on House Bill 2868

House Education Committee

February 25, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, 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 HB 2868.

This bill impacts ‘accelerated college credit’ programs. In these courses, a high school teacher works with a college or university department to offer college courses at the high school. These courses are sufficiently similar as to enable the student to be described as “taking a course” from the college or university.

HECC manages high school based college credit program standards, and in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Education, works to improve the availability of programming, particularly in rural and other underserved areas of the state. HECC works with an Oversight Committee for High School Based and College Credit Partnerships, staffed by HECC and ODE staff, with about 20 members, including practitioners from dual credit programs, as well as academic administrators. Colleges and universities that offer accelerated college credit opportunities undergo a process of self-study and peer review, and those programs that do not meet state standards and receive approval are not eligible to receive reimbursement for credits offered (OAR 715-017-0005).

Peer review for continuous improvement ensures that partnership college credit offerings in Oregon are accessible, transferable and set students up with credits they can use for degrees and certificates. That goes for dual credit programs, where the instructor has qualifications akin to a college instructor, sponsored dual credit, where instructors partner with a qualified instructor at a higher education institution, and assessment based learning programs, where evidence of proficiency is based on the results of college-level assessments.

As a result of the passage of HB 4053 (2018), HECC reports on the distribution of accelerated credit opportunities, and has found there are inequities in the ability of students from historically underserved demographic categories—Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, rural, and low income students, to access these courses. Each of these populations is less likely than white, urban, higher-income students to access partnership college credit.

Mobilizing enough teachers to earn additional graduate level credits in order to qualify to teach accelerated credit programs may inadvertently exacerbate these inequities, and many districts

may not be able to incentivize graduate course taking for current teachers, or attract and retain teachers have obtained these additional credits.

In 2019, the legislature passed HB 2263, which contained a number of strategies to bolster accelerated college credit program offerings around the state. One of these strategies was to develop graduate courses for high school teachers. Graduate credit courses do help high school teachers to qualify as dual credit instructors. The number of graduate credits required for partner teachers varies by college/university and academic discipline. Another strategy approved in HB 2663 was to provide block grants to districts to support collaboration between partners. This effort was not funded. If HB 2868 passes, the legislature may wish to revisit these strategies and examine the funding required to ensure that access to accelerated college credit opportunities are equitably available to all Oregon students.

Thank you for your time today.