



February 3, 2022

TO: Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Association of University Women of Oregon (AAUW of OR), we express our support, with some reservations, for Senate Bill 1552 and the -3, -4 Amendments as set forth below.

Expanding access to educational opportunities is a high priority for AAUW. We are gratified to acknowledge that today's education comes in a variety of venues and formats and must be committed to providing equitable outcomes for all Oregon's students. Senate Bill 1522 makes a number of positive investments in achieving these goals.

Our reservations relate to proposed changes to the Menstrual Dignity Act of 2021 (specific sections itemized in footnote below).¹ We are concerned that the exceptions identified in Senate Bill 1522 and its Amendments create an over broad "loophole" that will prevent menstrual products from being appropriately placed in schools and higher educational institutions. We are in particular concerned about the breadth of language which allows modifications by public education providers that "may be a threat to the health or safety of the students."

We are mindful of testimony of Mr. Richard Donovan, Legislative Services Specialist, Oregon School Boards Association, and Mr. Kyle Thomas, Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee. Mr. Donovan expresses concerns about the propriety and potential danger in leaving menstrual products unattended in certain school bathrooms, such as in long-term care and treatment facilities and in Early Learning and preschool facilities that are designated for use only by young students. Mr. Thomas notes potential problems in placing these products in certain spaces at higher education campuses, and in particular the placement of menstrual products in closed suites or apartment spaces.

The qualifications presented by Mr. Donovan and Mr. Thomas appear reasonable. We hope, however, that the final version of Senate Bill 1522 will more succinctly express these concerns.

We strongly support other provisions of Senate Bill 1522.

The fact that youth have been placed in corrections or juvenile detention programs should not erect a barrier to their receiving the kind of education that is available to students attending our regular high schools. It is in fact even more critical for these students to be afforded all the educational opportunities that can as a practical matter be provided. Many of these incarcerated youth have personal and familial histories of substance abuse, mental illness and trauma. They

¹ The specific language we are concerned about is set forth in Senate Bill 1522 Section 8(4)(c) at page 16; the Dash 3 Amendment, Section 12(4)(c) and (d) at page 31; and the Dash 4 Amendment Section 11(4)(c) and (d) at page 32.

are separated from their community support systems. These challenges mean that for many of these youth their efforts to improve knowledge and skills begins at a starting line that is farther back than for students in public high schools. It should not mean that the finishing line needs to replicate this disparity.

Providing additional resources to lower income students in the Oregon Promise program will enhance opportunities for their educational growth and learning. As acknowledged by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission in its presentation to this Committee in January 2022, Oregon Promise's method of providing tuition grant awards on the basis of a student's financial need after receipt of federal and state funds results in fewer resources for lower income students. As stated, more than 50% of recipients are low income, but nearly 80% of the program dollars go to higher income students. Lower income students may also experience personal life stressors and obstacles that have a negative impact on their high school grades.

This enhancement of Oregon Promise benefits is of particular importance given the budget cuts adopted by the legislature that in 2020 resulted in approximately 1,070 students having their awards revoked and 1,450 receiving notice in July 2020 that they would not be offered an award.² The fact that this portion of SB 1522 will likely result in a fiscal report should not result in a negative impact on its passage. Even in the midst of many needs that legislators must weigh when distributing state resources, additional Oregon Promise funding is a much-needed investment with short and long-term benefits to our students, families and communities.

We therefore stand behind proposals in SB 1522 to eliminate the \$50 copay, increase the minimum award to \$1000 from \$2000 and allow it to rise as tuition increases, and to lower the high school GPA requirement from 2.5 to 2.0. Given the potential rewards to the students, their families and our communities, these seem minimal changes.

We are particularly pleased to see a provision that asks the Department of Corrections to develop a plan to provide the equipment, connectivity and infrastructure necessary to ensure that adults in custody in the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility and the Snake River Correctional Institution have online access to adult basic skills, professional and technical, and college or industry recognized credit or certification programs.

Allowing eligible veterans, individuals who are granted humanitarian parole, asylum, conditional permanent residency or temporary protected status by any federal agency to benefit from in-state tuition represent positive steps to advancing these individuals' opportunities for advancement.

We urge the passage of Senate Bill 1552 as is articulated above.

Respectfully Submitted,

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² Oregon Promise FAQ's, <https://oregonstudentaid.gov/oregon-promise-faq.aspx>.