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HB 3068: ALLOW STUDENTS TO TAKE THE GED FOR A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Cascade Policy Institute urges you to support HB 3068 and pass it out of committee.

Oregon is experiencing a historic workforce shortage. According to the Oregon Employment Department, the state has 68,000 unfilled job openings. As the Baby Boom and Gen X generations retire, employers' challenges in finding the workers they need will only increase.

One way to help alleviate this squeeze is to **shorten the time it takes people to get trained and credentialed** in lower and mid-level positions. Currently, some Oregon students are allowed to graduate high school early, but the process is cumbersome, and the **GED exam is unfairly seen as a second-rate credential**.

HB 3068 simplifies the process for students to **graduate early by passing the GED** and requires their **transcript show they received a high school diploma**.

WHO COULD GRADUATE EARLY?

Students aged 16 and older, with permission of their parent/guardian

Oregon's four-year high school graduation rate has historically ranked in the bottom five in the nation. Oregon has the 15th highest dropout rate (6.1%), according to the most recent state-by-state comparison published by the U.S. Department of Education. Disadvantaged students leave school at significantly higher rates. This bill would remove barriers for students ready to move to the next step in their lives.

Earning a GED while still enrolled in school would provide students a low-risk option to receive a diploma, graduate early, and move on to higher education or employment. Under this measure, they can remain enrolled in school and would not have to drop out first before taking the GED exams.

Because HB 3068 allows students who pass the GED to graduate early, **the bill would simultaneously increase Oregon's graduation rate and reduce the state's dropout rate.**

Academic research shows that **individuals who graduate early from high school by taking the GED earn nearly 5% more** than those who didn't graduate early—with women showing even more significant income gains.

Because Oregon already has a well-established program in place to administer and oversee GED testing, **there is no fiscal impact anticipated with this measure.**

WHAT IS THE GED EXAM?

General Educational Development (GED) tests are a group of four subject tests that measure proficiency in (1) science, (2) mathematics, (3) social studies, and (4) reading, and writing.

When passed, the GED provides certification that the test-taker has high school-level academic skills. Each test is scored on a scale of 0-200.

- 145 or higher is **passing**,
- 165 or higher demonstrates **college readiness**, and
- 175 or higher can qualify the test-taker for up to **10 hours of college credit**.

CAN MINORS TAKE THE GED IN OREGON?

The short answer is, “Yes, but it’s almost impossible.”

In Oregon, people as young as 16 can sit for the GED, but **only if** they experience a significant life event such as dropping out of school, becoming emancipated, getting married, or being incarcerated.

In other words, under current law, only a tiny fraction of Oregon 16- and 17-year-olds are allowed to take the GED.

WHAT WILL HB 3068 DO TO OREGON’S DROP-OUT RATE AND GRADUATION RATE?

Under HB 3068 a student would no longer have to drop out of high school to take the GED exam. Because students can remain enrolled, HB 3068 would likely **reduce Oregon’s drop-out rate**.

A student who passes the GED under HB 3068 will be awarded a diploma and be exempt from compulsory attendance. By awarding a diploma, the student can be considered a high school graduate, thereby **boosting Oregon’s graduation rate**.

HAVE OTHER STATES MADE IT EASIER FOR MINORS TO TAKE THE GED?

North Dakota has the fewest restrictions on taking the GED:

- Anyone 16 years old or older can take the GED;
- Students are not required to take any courses or to prepare in any way for the GED test;
- Students scoring 145 or higher receive a diploma from the state Department of Public Instruction.