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NEWS RELEASE

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SENATE SENDS TUITION EQUITY BILL TO GOVERNOR'S DESK

(SALEM) – A decade after it was first introduced, legislation that will provide equity in tuition costs for Oregon high school graduates regardless of their citizenship status is on its way to the governor's desk.

The Oregon Senate voted 19-11 Thursday in favor of House Bill 2787. The measure would allow graduates of Oregon High Schools who were brought to the United States illegally by their parents to pay the same in-state tuition rates paid by their classmates who are legal residents of Oregon and the United States.

“This bill creates a path to opportunity, a path to the American dream. It creates a path to being a taxpayer. It creates a path to greatness, and a path to being a contributor to our economy in the light of day, not relegated to the shadows,” said Senate President Peter Courtney, chief Senate sponsor of the measure. “All these students want is the same chance to succeed as their high school classmates.”

Currently in Oregon, undocumented students are forced to pay much higher out-of-state tuition rates putting a college education out of their reach. If signed by the governor, HB 2787 will change that beginning with the next academic year.

In his first session as Senate President in 2003, Courtney introduced a tuition equity measure at the request of the principal of Woodburn High School. It passed the Senate 22-8. A measure sponsored by former Sens. Frank Morse and Dave Nelson also passed the Senate 18-11 in 2011. Both times, the measures died without a hearing in the House.

This year, Representative Michael Dembrow worked with Courtney and introduced the measure in the House, where it passed for the first time on a 38-18 vote February 22.

“Tuition equity is critical to our goal of making higher education affordable and accessible to every high school graduate in this state,” said Dembrow (D-Portland). “The passage of HB 2787 is a tremendous moment, a true beacon of hope for young Oregonians throughout the state.”