Democrats Make College More Affordable for Students and Help Small Non-Profits

A BIPOC Caucus priority bill, House Bill 2802 will close equity gaps, make college more affordable, and prepare students for the workforce

Salem, Ore. - Today, the Senate passed House Bill 2802, an important step towards reimagining how Oregon’s students can graduate without crippling debt and be prepared to meet the demands of the job market. The bill also helps small non-profit organizations with their workforce shortage.

The bill establishes two work study pilot programs at Portland State University and Eastern Oregon University that will encourage non-profits to hire students for 10-20 hours a week at a rate no lower than the minimum wage. Students who are enrolled in the program will receive 20% off their tuition for each term.

“This bill helps students with the rising cost of tuition while also addressing the workforce shortage among our small nonprofits. It’s also a win-win for eastern Oregon, as well as the Portland metro,” said Representative Nathan Sosa (D-Greater Hillsboro), chief sponsor of the bill.

Over the past decade, federal student loans jumped from an already alarming $500 billion to over $1.3 trillion. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities and first-generation college graduates, in particular, often lag behind their peers in terms of financial stability and professional attainment due to the weight of student debt and the lack of a professional network.

Although work study programs offer some reprieve, there are serious equity concerns within these programs. Inaccessible to undocumented students, they often come in the form of low-paying jobs that do not offer the skills, training, and professional development necessary to build a career following graduation. House Bill 2802 helps to break down these barriers.
This bill passed 38-19 in the House and 19-5 in the Senate. It now heads to the Governor’s desk.

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