



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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House Passes Bill Improving Access to Higher Education

HB 3106 makes improvements to Expanded Options Program

SALEM – The House today passed HB 3106, which improves Oregon’s Expanded Options program. The bill, carried by Representative Ben Cannon (D-Portland), passed by a 58-1 vote.

“HB 3106 makes college education a reality for more Oregon students,” said Rep. Cannon (D-Portland), bill sponsor and teacher. “More students ought to be able to participate in Expanded Options, a program that allows them to earn high school and college credits simultaneously – without having to pay tuition.”

The Expanded Options Program aims to provide a seamless education system for students enrolled in grades 11 and 12 by giving at-risk students additional options to continue or complete their education, earn concurrent high school and college credits, and gain early entry into post-secondary education.

In 2005, the Legislature enacted SB 300, seeking to expand dual high school and college credit programs in Oregon high schools. HB 3106 improves the Expanded Options Program, providing greater resources for Oregon’s students.

“Under this bill, more at-risk students will have access to greater learning opportunities,” said Representative Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis/Philomath), Co-Chair of the House Education Committee. “We heard inspiring testimony from students and teachers who have seen the Expanded Options program turn lives around.”

During the 2009-10 school year, 1767 Oregon students earned high school and post-secondary credits simultaneously while saving \$143,127 in tuition costs at the university level and \$799,645 at the community college level. K-12 dollars follow Expanded Options students to the post-secondary classroom, allowing them to earn college credits at Oregon institutions of higher learning while still in high school.

Some school districts chose to waive out of the Expanded Options program because they offered alternatives, like Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes. HB 3601 tightens up the waiver process and ensures that at-risk students are moved to the front of the line in participating in the Expanded Options program.

“The traditional high school environment just doesn't work for all kids,” said Representative Michael Dembrow (D- NE Portland/Parkrose/Maywood Park). “Sometimes students who are at risk of dropping out of high school have the skills to attend college and succeed. I've seen kids in that situation really blossom once they move onto the college campus. We should make it easier for them to do that.”

The bill now heads to Senate for consideration.

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