



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Senate votes to expand tuition equity to grad students

SB 859: Allows undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, in some cases

SALEM – Students educated in Oregon’s schools will be able to pay in-state tuition rates for graduate programs at the state’s public universities, regardless of immigration status, under a bill passed by the Oregon Senate.

[Senate Bill 859](#) – which passed with a 23-7 vote today on the Senate floor – permits students who qualify for tuition equity for undergraduate programs in Oregon’s public universities to also be eligible for in-state tuition in their graduate studies.

“We are talking about children who have no say in where they are born or where their parents take them,” said Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “But once they are here, going to school with the rest of Oregon’s children, they become our own. We need to make sure those students have the same opportunities for a better life that is afforded all other Oregonians.”

The Legislative Assembly first permitted undergraduate students who are not citizens or lawful permanent residents to pay in-state tuition and fees at public universities in 2013 when it passed [House Bill 2787](#). This is commonly referred to as tuition equity.

To qualify for tuition equity, an undergraduate student must attend an Oregon elementary or high school for three years immediately prior to graduating or leaving school without a diploma, attend an elementary or high school in the United States or a U.S. territory for five years immediately prior to graduating or leaving school without a diploma, earn a high school

diploma or equivalent and demonstrate intent to become a United States citizen or lawful permanent resident. Senate Bill 859 expands eligibility beyond undergraduate studies and includes students who are pursuing graduate degrees and meet these criteria.

According to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, about 250 undergraduate students qualify for in-state tuition and fees under tuition equity provisions. Senate Bill 859 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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