



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Tom Powers (503) 986-1074
tom.powers@state.or.us

Tuition Equity Bill Wins Final Legislative Approval

HB 2787A will improve Oregon's long-term economic outlook by continuing investment in students

SALEM—Ten years following the concept's first passage by the Oregon Senate, a bill to grant in-state college tuition to Oregon high school graduates independent of their immigration status won final legislative approval today. HB 2787A passed the Senate on a 19-11 vote, allowing prospective students a clear pathway to an affordable higher education as soon as the next school year.

“Tuition Equity is about continuing our state’s investment in its students. This bill helps us improve our workforce, putting Oregon in a better position to compete in a global economy,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton). “Giving these students access to an education, allowing them to work in Oregon and contribute to our state’s tax base is in everyone’s best interest.”

House Bill 2787A, “Tuition Equity,” grants in-state tuition to students entering the Oregon University System if they attended elementary or secondary schools in the United States for at least five years immediately prior to receiving a high school diploma, graduated from an Oregon high school, and are actively working toward U.S. citizenship. Pending the Governor’s approval, HB 2787A will become operative at the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year.

“Increasingly, companies rely on a skilled workforce to determine their location. Expanding access to higher education will provide a new opportunity for these students and make Oregon a more attractive location for businesses,” said Senator Jackie Dingfelder (D-Portland). “HB 2787A will actually bring more tuition dollars into the Oregon University System because students who would otherwise be unable to afford college will enroll.”

Senate President Peter Courtney first introduced the Tuition Equity bill in 2003 at the request of Woodburn High School’s principal. In that year, the bill passed the Senate but stalled in the Oregon House of Representatives. In 2011, Senators Frank Morse and David Nelson, both Republicans, revived the Tuition Equity bill where it once again passed the Senate but failed to gain traction in the House.

The cost of out-of-state tuition at most Oregon universities is about three times greater than the cost of in-state tuition. That alone puts a college education out of reach for many of the students that HB 2787A affects.

“Tuition Equity will have a life-changing positive impact on students who would otherwise not be able to afford the high cost of college,” said Senator Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Students who have studied and prepared diligently in high school will now be able to realize their dream of a college education.”

Thirteen other states have enacted similar laws, including the border states of Texas, New Mexico, California, and Washington. In 2010, the California Supreme Court upheld the state’s Tuition Equity law.

HB 2787A now heads to Governor John A. Kitzhaber for his signature.

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