



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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CONTACT: Molly Woon (503) 986-1074
molly.woon@state.or.us

Senate approves college tuition waivers for foster kids *HB 3471 will help young adults who face greatest challenges*

SALEM – A bill that will grant college tuition waivers to current or former children in the Oregon foster care system was approved by the Senate this afternoon. House Bill 3471 will require Oregon’s seven public universities, 17 community colleges, and the Oregon Health Sciences University to waive tuition and fees to young adults under 25 who have been a part of the foster care system.

“Every year, nearly 400 teenagers age out of Oregon’s foster care system,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “These brave young people must overcome many obstacles in life and are some of the least prepared to deal with the challenges of enrolling in higher education. Many don’t have the family structure or emotional support to help them make the transition to college and the costs associated are unrealistic. This bill will help former foster kids pursue college and a more promising future.”

Studies show that within four years of leaving foster care, young adults are only 50 percent likely to earn a college degree, while 84 percent will become young parents, 50 percent will be unemployed, and nearly 33 percent will be on some sort of public assistance. When it comes to higher education, only 6 percent go on to earn a two or four year degree.

“This bill will help us break the cycle of poverty and educational failure,” said Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson (D-Gresham). “With this bill, we are giving some of Oregon’s most at-risk young adults an opportunity that wouldn’t otherwise be available.”

Specifically, HB 3471 covers the family portion of a student’s financial aid contribution, after accounting for most grants, federal aid, and the Oregon Opportunity Grant. The bill also requires participating students to complete 30 hours of community service each year. Advocates say this requirement could be fulfilled by mentoring other foster youth who are considering or about to enter college.

Upon approval by the Governor, Oregon will join sixteen other states with similar tuition waivers for foster children. The bill heads to his desk next.

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