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Senate passes dual credits bill to help make college more affordable

Senate Bill 222B will expand options for high school students to earn college credit

SALEM—Today the Oregon Senate passed a bill that will help more high school students reach college by allowing for more ‘dual credits’ courses. Senate Bill 222B, which passed the Senate on a vote of 30-0, sets up a process to help more schools offer courses in coordination with community colleges and universities.

“By allowing high school students more opportunities to earn college credit, we can make college more affordable and encourage on-time graduation,” said Senator Mark Hass (D-Beaverton), chief sponsor of the bill and chair of the Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee. “Earning college credits in high school means that students won’t have to pay tuition to take those classes in college, saving students and families thousands of dollars.”

In the 2011-2012 school year more than 25,000 students participated in at least one dual credit course. Altogether, these students earned 192,000 credits, or about 8 credits per student. However, as of 2010 about 25 percent of schools did not offer the option of dual credits. In schools that do offer them, the options are often limited.

Senate Bill 222B will expand dual credits programs by establishing the Accelerated Learning Committee, which will examine ways to develop partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and universities. The bill also requires community colleges to collaborate with interested school districts to facilitate college credit programs, and only allows high schools to require more than 24 credits if the additional credits qualify for credit at a postsecondary institution.

“This dual credits bill is a vital component of the Senate Democrats’ agenda to reinvest in K-12 public schools and increase access to higher education for all students,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland). “Developing partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and universities will benefit students across Oregon, especially those struggling to afford a college education.”

Senate Bill 222B now goes to the Oregon House of Representatives for a vote.

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