



**REPRESENTATIVE GENE WHISNANT
OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOUSE DISTRICT 53**

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, July 5, 2017

Contact: Josie Whisnant, 503.986.1453

Rep.GeneWhisnant@oregonlegislature.gov

Rep. Whisnant Fights to Bring Down Cost of Higher Education

Uses Experience and Relationships to Pass Bipartisan Legislation During 2017 Regular Session

Salem, Ore. – Representative Gene Whisnant (R-Sunriver), now serving in his eighth term as a state legislator, has introduced and advocated for legislation during the 2017 session that will positively affect the cost of higher education in Oregon.

This session, Rep. Whisnant introduced [HB 2729](#), which would extend Oregon's Open Educational Resources (OER) program indefinitely. This program provides resources to students at Oregon's public colleges and universities, including free online textbooks, which are estimated to save students approximately \$2 million each year. HB 2729 is scheduled to receive a vote in the House as soon as today. In addition, Rep. Whisnant introduced [HB 3288](#), which will require the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to report to the legislature each biennium on cost drivers that are affecting institutions of higher education. The bill would provide lawmakers with key information helping them to identify ways to slow and even prevent further tuition increases.

As Vice Chair of the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development and as a member of both the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and the Joint Subcommittee on Education, Rep. Whisnant has advocated for [SB 1032](#), which continues funding for the Oregon Promise program, and [HB 2998](#), which would establish a "transfer of credits" program that puts students first and will enable more of them to graduate in four years or less.

"I am proud to have played a role in moving these two bills, and I would like to recognize my legislative colleague, Representative Mark Johnson, who did most of the heavy lifting to get them so close to the finish line," said Rep. Whisnant. "I have always believed that controlling or reducing the cost of higher education is the best way to improve its accessibility for many Oregonians. In the face of current cost drivers such as salary increases, PERS payments, and health care costs, these and many of the other bills I have worked to pass this session will directly benefit our students both financially and academically."

###