

SB 235 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 3/8, 3/29

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Department of Corrections to develop a plan for providing distance learning technology and infrastructure to allow online access to education programs for adults in custody. Requires department to submit plan to interim legislative committee by August 1, 2021. Requires Department of Corrections provide access to online education programs to adults in custody by September 1, 2022. Takes effect 91st day following adjournment sine die.

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Education programs offered to adults in custody
- Technology needs for adults in custody to access education during COVID-19 pandemic
- Geographic restrictions of education while in custody
- Value of education to reentry into community
- Projected cost of implementation
- Constitutional, statutory and logistical restrictions
- Relationship with common course numbering and other credit transfer initiatives

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon law requires the Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide an education system within each correctional institution for adults in custody. The stated objective of this education system is twofold: To implement a basic skills development program which assesses each adult's academic and intellectual competency, and to provide adults in custody with professional and occupational skills to prepare them for jobs post-release. DOC offers several educational programs to adults in custody, including preparation for the General Education Development (GED) high school equivalency test, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, community college courses, and special education programs for adults in custody with disabilities. Senate Bill 235 would allow adults in custody to access online educational content using equipment and infrastructure provided by DOC as a part of an educational program.

Senate Bill 235 requires the Department of Corrections to develop a plan to provide distance learning technology and infrastructure to allow online access to education programs for adults in custody, requires the department to submit the plan to legislative committees by August 1, 2021, and requires the department to provide online access to education programs for adults in custody by September 1, 2022. Takes effect 91st day following adjournment sine die.