

Senate Bill 849

Sponsored by Senator LIEBER, Representatives REARDON, GRAYBER; Representatives MCLAIN, NOSSE

SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

Requires each community college and public university to hire benefits navigator to assist students in determining eligibility and applying for federal, state and local benefits programs.

Requires community colleges and public universities to establish statewide consortium to enable benefits navigator to coordinate with benefits navigators at other institutions and to develop best practices.

Requires community colleges and public universities to develop internal process to enable students to provide feedback and recommendations on how institution can better assist students in determining eligibility for benefits programs and applying for assistance under benefits programs.

Declares emergency, effective on passage.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

1
2 Relating to benefits programs for students at institutions of higher education; and declaring an
3 emergency.

4 **Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

5 **SECTION 1. (1) As used in this section:**

6 (a) **"Benefits navigator" means an individual who is employed by a public institution of**
7 **higher education for the purpose of helping students at the institution apply for and receive**
8 **assistance from benefits programs.**

9 (b) **"Benefits program" means any federal, state or local program that provides assist-**
10 **ance or benefits to individuals with financial need.**

11 (c) **"Public institution of higher education" has the meaning given that term in ORS**
12 **350.350.**

13 **(2) Each public institution of higher education shall:**

14 (a) **Employ a benefits navigator who has a detailed understanding of eligibility require-**
15 **ments for benefits programs and how to apply for assistance under benefits programs;**

16 (b) **Provide training for the benefits navigator employed by the institution, with training**
17 **guidance and support provided by the Department of Human Services to the institution; and**

18 (c) **Participate in a statewide consortium with other public institutions of higher educa-**
19 **tion for the purpose of facilitating communication between benefits navigators at different**
20 **institutions and developing best practices for benefits navigators.**

21 **(3) Each benefits navigator hired under this section shall:**

22 (a) **Assist students at the public institution of higher education in determining eligibility**
23 **for benefits programs and applying for assistance under benefits programs;**

24 (b) **Use the consortium developed under subsection (2) of this section to coordinate with**
25 **benefits navigators at other public institutions of higher education for the purpose of col-**
26 **lecting data and developing best practices for helping students apply for and receive assist-**
27 **ance from benefits programs; and**

NOTE: Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 (c) Coordinate and provide culturally specific resources, including resources for non-
2 English speakers, to support students at the institution.

3 (4) Each public institution of higher education, in consultation with the benefits
4 navigator hired by that institution, shall develop an internal process to enable students at
5 the institution to provide feedback and recommendations on how the institution can better
6 assist students in determining eligibility for benefits programs and applying for assistance
7 under benefits programs.

8 SECTION 2. In addition to and not in lieu of any other appropriation, there is appropri-
9 ated to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, for the biennium beginning July 1,
10 2021, out of the General Fund, the amount of \$____, for distribution to community colleges
11 operated under ORS chapter 341 and public universities listed in ORS 352.002, for the purpose
12 of hiring benefits navigators under section 1 of this 2021 Act.

13 SECTION 3. This 2021 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public
14 peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2021 Act takes effect
15 on its passage.
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