



## **Testimony on House Bill 2089**

House Education Committee

February 4, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2089. This bill passed the House Education Committee and the full House unanimously in 2020.

The HECC serves as the state board with responsibility for recommending to the legislature changes to community college service district boundaries. For over a year from 2018 to 2020, HECC worked with Central Oregon Community College Service District (COCC), Klamath Community College Service District (KCC), Lake County Officials, and concerned residents of the northernmost portion of Lake County on the question of the status of the territory and whether it should remain affiliated with COCC, move to KCC, or not be affiliated with any community college service district. This investigation and collaboration began with a petition to the Commission from residents of the territory who were dissatisfied with the level of services provided by COCC.

After multiple public hearings and extended consultation with all parties, the Commission determined that residents of the territory would be better served by KCC. HB 2089, through its whereas statements, makes the case as to why territory residents, numbering fewer than 2,000 and graduating approximately 10 high school students per year, are better served by changing affiliation. If passed, it will take effect on June 30 of 2022. This proposal has the approval of KCC, COCC, individual county leaders in Lake County, and the North Lake School District.

Since the establishment of COCC, conditions in this part of the state have changed. Where there once was no school building, the North Lake School District now stands, and based on its location, only those students in the northern part of the school district are eligible for in-district services from COCC. Unlike most other schools in COCC, North Lake School District is not part of the Intermountain ESD. KCC itself was not founded until 1996, but has been serving Lake County for several years, including providing distance-learning opportunities to students in the North Lake School District.

At the public hearings, residents expressed that they believe the programmatic offerings from KCC are more aligned with their needs, and that they are satisfied with the services provided by KCC. During the same hearings process, COCC expressed no current plans to increase their level of services to the residents of the territory.

In addition to the prospect of improved services, the residents of the territory will experience a reduction of their mill rate, as KCC's taxing district rate is lower than that of COCC.

HECC supports access to higher education services for all portions of the state, and it recognizes that from time to time, the needs of certain parts of the state change, and capabilities and relationships evolve. The bill before you, which asks you to affirm the order issued by the Commission in December, recognizes this change and maintains access to in-district community college services to residents of the northernmost portion Lake County. I hope you will support it.

Thank you for your time today.