

Oregon

Community

Foundation

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Testimony from Oregon Community Foundation in support of SB 5528

Submitted by Megan McElroy, OCF Program Officer for Scholarships

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, Members of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education:

Oregon Community Foundation urges you to support SB 5528.

As a community foundation, we can engage in direct advocacy on legislation, and we consider that to be an important tool for supporting key opportunities that are highly aligned with our priorities and are critical to reduce the opportunity gap for students.

The full replacement of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's Financial Accounting Management Information System (FAMIS) is one of those issues because of its impact on students and our ability to support them through our scholarship program. Oregon Community Foundation awards over \$11.5 million in scholarships annually to students from every corner of the state. OCF partners with the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) to administer nearly \$9 million of those scholarship funds. These scholarships support over 3,500 students each year, and more than half of those students are the first in their family to attend college. A new, more efficient FAMIS would help break down barriers for students in accessing financial aid, and it would benefit OCF's scholarship program and the donors who make those scholarships possible.

Generous Oregonians create many new scholarship funds at OCF every year in order to advance access to educational opportunities for students across the state. OCF relies on its public-private partnership with OSAC to administer this growing number of scholarship funds efficiently and accurately while following individual donor intent and supporting thousands of students in their pursuit of higher education. A new FAMIS will allow OSAC to scale its scholarship administration and serve more students by nimbly adapting to track and manage additional scholarship funds. This would translate to OCF providing a better service to donors and the students their funds support.

The highest priority in replacing FAMIS is the reduction of barriers for students accessing financial aid. A new FAMIS will make the application process mobile-friendly and easier to understand and navigate. It will also allow OSAC staff to reach students through multiple channels including text messaging. This is crucial for low-income students, students of color, rural students, non-traditional students, and first-generation college students. Research shows that application rates lag for these groups and serious barriers remain for those most in need of help paying for college. It is critical to invest in making the system more accessible in order to boost application completion rates and streamline the financial aid process for students.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 5528, and please consider OCF as a resource and partner in this work.