



Date: February 12th, 2021

To: House Committee on Education

Re: OEA support for HB 2835, Benefit Navigators

Chair Alonso Leon, members of the committee,

The Oregon Education Association represents 41,000 education professionals across the state of Oregon. From early learning to community college, from teachers to professors to education service professionals, OEA's members span the entire spectrum of education. Critical to this conversation are the hundreds of classified employees at community colleges we represent. Folks who do the critical work of counseling students, helping them navigate their degrees, and generally supporting them through their education.

OEA supports HB 2835.

Our members already navigate many complex systems in support of their students. Adding extra layers of bureaucratic understanding to their plates is not feasible, and as new benefits and exceptions for existing ones are made in response to COVID-19, the systems only become more difficult to process and navigate. Having someone dedicated to understanding these systems at each college is critical to supporting our students in this time of need.

As the need for community colleges grows through the upcoming recovery, so will the need for access to benefits by our students. HB 2835 will be critical to ensuring that students' needs are met and supporting them through completion so that they can help reignite our economy.

Please pas HB 2835 with a "do pass" recommendation.

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