



## **Testimony on Senate Bill 233**

Senate Education Committee

February 15, 2021

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Thomsen, 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 SB 233.

Since the passage of HB 2998 in 2017, HECC has played a central role in coordinating and setting policy for work to develop a core transfer map and major transfer maps for commonly enrolled majors. Through this very direct experience and engagement with community colleges and universities, HECC has come to the conclusion that furthering progress on transfer requires a significant update to the framework under which institutions do the difficult and weedy work of aligning course outcomes in a manner that leads to smooth pathways and seamless experiences for students.

Principally, it is HECC's observation that three elements are required:

- 1. Clear expectations for curricular alignment.** In HB 2998, the legislature required the development of major transfer maps that would allow for students to transfer from college to university with the equivalent of junior status in the major. This goal is clear. What was left unstated in the legislation is the amount of variance and student choice, the introduction of which could affect which institutions a student could transfer into with such status, would be allowed to remain. The result is, in some instances, transfer pathways that do not provide for the type of universal transfer experience that may have been the intent of the legislature. The Commission encourages expectations to be clearly stated in statute.
- 2. Accountability Mechanisms.** Under current law, there is no direct consequence, other than reputational harm, in the event that institutions fail to design or agree on unified transfer maps in specific disciplines. To use terminology that has become a running gag amongst veterans of the recent work, there is no 'transfer jail.' As a result of this lack of clear accountability, failure to reach consensus on the part of institutional faculty is an option. Recently, faculty in the criminal justice field were unable to reach agreement on a transfer path, and the result is that those working to implement transfer law and policy must simply move on for now. The Commission believes accountability, must be a key component of future legislation, while at the same time we hope any such mechanisms would be unused. The inclusion of such provisions will motivate institutions and faculty to make every effort to meet the requirements of any future law.
- 3. Monitoring, Reporting, and Adjusting.** Even when all institutions agree on common course numbering or a transfer pathway, the implementation of the transfer system still depends on the work and judgement of individual faculty, advisors, and

registrars. Institutions should be monitored to ensure compliance with the provisions of the law and reports should be generated showing how students are able to move through various institutions. When these reports show that institutions are doing well, they should be praised. Where they show institutions are lagging in implementation, or that transfer students at one institution are facing unusual barriers, institutions should be guided and encouraged to improve.

HECC has produced more detailed guidance and recommendations on these principles that is contained in a policy memo. That memo has been submitted to OLIS and is available for your review.

Finally, HECC has sponsored legislation, SB 76, which is a reintroduction of prior legislation on transfer. This legislation contains important provisions that are funded in the Governor's Recommended Budget. We request these provisions, establishing more stringent reporting requirements, and requiring the first steps toward developing a system of communicating transfer paths to students and linking institutions together in whatever technological methods are required to support smooth transfer, be incorporated into the underlying bill.

Thank you for your time today.