

Public Comment on HB2868
House Committee on Education
February 25, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Neron, Vice Chair Weber and Members of the of the House Education Committee. My name is Adam Whalen; I serve as the Program Coordinator for the Willamette Promise Program. I am pleased to provide comment on behalf of the 45 school districts that we serve in Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Washington, Tillamook, Clatsop, and Columbia counties. These counties have participated in the Willamette Promise Dual Credit program over the last six years.

First, I would like to express our appreciation to Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) for their leadership in developing a comprehensive set of standards for accelerated credit programs. The work has been particularly impactful for students in rural communities, students from underrepresented/underserved populations, and first-generation college students. The new accelerated credit standards provide guidance and uniformity through three well-defined pathways: traditional dual credit, sponsored dual credit, or assessment-based learning experiences. Programs are held accountable to these standards by a rigorous peer review process overseen by the High School Based College Credit Partnerships Oversight Committee (HSBCCP).

This bill has been introduced on three different occasions to this committee. In previous years, a number of stakeholders have provided testimony on what matters most is what students are able to demonstrate in the end, not what credentials are held by the instructors. When college professors define course outcomes, align those outcomes closely to on-campus courses, create assessments to measure proficiency, and collaborate with high school teachers, the experience for students is rigorous and consistent across programs.

In the case of the Willamette Promise, course outcomes are aligned with on-campus subject area standards. All teachers are trained, continuously by college or university faculty, and Willamette Promise teachers are required to use prescribed outcomes, common assessment tools and norm their scoring practices as led by faculty experts. The idea that our students won't be as prepared to enter college is simply untrue. In fact, students in our program are more prepared for a higher education. A 2017 HECC study found that students that exit our program earn higher grade point averages than their peers and do so while taking a higher amount of credits per term.

Effectively, HB 2868 would end programs that are moving the needle in terms of equitable outcomes for students. The equity gap that continues to persist in Dual Credit programming would become even greater and the millions of dollars that the state has invested in innovative approaches to Dual Credit programming would be wasted.

We urge you to consider the negative impact that this bill would have on thousands of students during such a trying time in educational history. As dual enrollment programs continue to grow rapidly around the country, with nearly one-third of high school students participating in 2019 (Shivji and Wilson), it is vital there is support for equitable pathways for *all* students through programs, such as the Willamette Promise, that are committed to student success not only in high school, but also throughout college and beyond.

