

SB 270 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

Prepared By: Ellen O'Brien, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/23

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Permits an adults in custody to apply for and enroll in post-secondary academic programs, including at community colleges outside the boundaries of the community college district in which the facility is located, subject to administrative rules and regulations issued by the Oregon Department of Corrections.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In response to the 2020 reinstatement of Pell Grant eligibility for adults in custody (AICs), Senate Bill 234 (2021) required the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to convene a stakeholder group on postsecondary education for AICs. The resulting SB 234 workgroup report includes background information on the federal expansion of Pell Grant eligibility to AICs, beginning with the Second Chance Pell Program in 2015. All AICs who are enrolled in approved programs will have access to Pell Grants starting July 1, 2023.

The SB 234 workgroup report also provides a list of postsecondary education and training opportunities offered at DOC facilities as of 2021. At that time, two community colleges – Chemeketa Community College and Treasure Valley Community College – offered Pell Grant-eligible Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degrees to adults in custody at 3 facilities, none of which housed women. The report identified 7 additional post-secondary academic programs offered at correctional facilities by Oregon universities and colleges that may be Pell Grant- eligible after July 1, 2023.

Inmates' application and enrollment in academic programs under SB 270 would remain subject to administrative rules and regulations adopted by the Oregon Department of Corrections. In current rule, the Oregon DOC requires that "collegiate programs" be approved by the institution education staff and paid for by the inmate (OAR 291-113-0010, OAR 291-113-0015). The education unit at an institution may assist inmates with program activities such as proctoring tests, callouts for viewing videos, or listening to cassette tapes; however, this assistance is dependent on available resources and may differ from facility to facility (OAR 291-113-0015). Furthermore, pursuit of a post-secondary education is currently limited in OAR 291-113-0015 to "classes provided at the facility or by the local community college or through correspondence courses."

SB 270 permits adults in custody to apply for and enroll in post-secondary academic programs, regardless of location, provided they adhere to the administrative rules and regulations of the Oregon Department of Corrections.