

HB 2706 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Higher Education

Action Date: 02/16/23

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.
(Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 9-0-0-0

Yeas: 9 - Bowman, Elmer, Hudson, Lively, Mannix, McIntire, Ruiz, Sosa, Wright

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 1/26, 2/14, 2/16

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Removes limit on age at which an eligible former foster child left foster care. Expands definition of eligible former foster child to include individuals who were in foster care for total of at least 18 months while under the age of 14. Expands tuition waiver for former foster children and youth experiencing homelessness to cover tuition at private career schools. Permits Higher Education Coordinating Commission to award scholarships to former foster children enrolled in private career school.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Youth choosing between adoption and financial aid

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND:

Under ORS 350.300, tuition and fees are currently waived for current and former foster children as well as current and former homeless youth. A "former foster child" is currently eligible for a tuition and fee waiver if they were: 1) in foster care for at least 6 months between the ages of 14 and 21, and 2) did not leave foster care prior to age 16.

House Bill 2706 A removes the second requirement. Under the new definition, any child who was in foster care for at least 18 months under the age of 14 or at least 6 months between the ages of 14 and 21 will be eligible for a tuition and fee waiver, regardless of the age at which they left the state's care. Eligibility for both the Oregon Opportunity Grant (ORS 348.205) and scholarships for current or former foster children (ORS 348.272) rely on the definition of "former foster child" in ORS 350.300, meaning that eligibility for these financial aid programs would also be broader under House Bill 2706 A.

Currently, tuition waivers and scholarships for former foster children can be used to cover the costs of attending a public university, Oregon Health and Science University, community college, or, in the case of scholarships, regionally accredited independent institutions. House Bill 2706 A allows these programs to provide financial aid to former foster children and youth experiencing homelessness at private career schools.

House Bill 2706 A expands eligibility of former foster children for state-administered financial aid to include children in foster care under the age of 14 and former foster children enrolled in private career schools.