

**HB 2615 Relating to participation in Oregon Promise program by veterans**

Position: **Favorable**

January 26, 2023

The Honorable Dacia Graybor, Chair

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

CC: Honorable Members of the House Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans Committee

My name is John Lee, and I am a military veteran with 20 years of service with the United States Army. I am a resident of Brownsville, Oregon, and submit this testimony as the Legislative Commission Chair representing The American Legion, Department of Oregon representing 113 post with over 10,500 members.

**The American Legion, Department of Oregon strongly supports HB 2615.**

Every year young men and women enter the military after graduation from high school. They will sign up while in their senior year and leave for training immediately after. The military is not a job but a duty. It is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Only those who have served, or their immediate family members can understand what this commitment is.

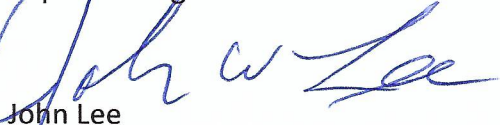
Unlike those that move on to a job or as a full-time collage student, it is impossible for new military members to attend college. They have little control on where they live, where they train, or how long their days are. Even though there was a college just down the road from my base, I did not have the time or the permission to attend it. Many complete their training and will be sent to combat. Because of this, anyone going in to the military can not apply for the Oregon Promise Grant as it is written today.

So many times, high school graduates are left with the decision of defending our country by serving in the military or going to college. Unfortunately, they can not do both. Even online classes are not possible.

HB 2615 will increase access to Community College for veterans separating to Oregon upon discharge from the military. Specifically, it expands eligibility for the Oregon Promise Grant (OPG) to allow veterans who were Oregon High school graduates to apply for the grant within 12 months of their discharge from military service and enrollment at an Oregon community college. It also gives veterans a choice as to whether they use their G.I. Bill while utilizing the OPG. If a veteran chooses to use their G.I. Bill in conjunction with the OPG, the G.I. Bill amount will not be calculated to determine their OPG award.

**On behalf of The American Legion, Department of Oregon and our state's Veterans, the Legion urges the committee to support HP 2615 and the benefits it will bring to our Veterans.**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide The American Legion, Department of Oregon, position on this important legislative issue.



John Lee

The American Legion, Department of Oregon  
Legislative Commission Chair