

SB 1551 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/8, 2/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure allows students who graduated from Oregon high schools in 2020 and 2021, and are otherwise eligible, to apply for the Oregon Promise in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years. It declares an emergency, effective on passage.

May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 The amendment replaces the measure. It allows students who graduated from Oregon high schools between March 1, 2020, and February 28, 2022, who enrolled in college or university for one term or less, and who are otherwise eligible, to receive the Oregon Promise grant for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.

Detailed Summary:

Requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to waive the following requirements for students who graduated high school or passed the General Education Development (GED) test between March 1, 2020, and February 28, 2022, and who enrolled in college or university for up to one term:

- the Oregon Promise eligibility requirement that students enroll in community college within six months of graduating high school or passing the GED test, or
- the Oregon Promise eligibility requirements for continuing eligibility, including making satisfactory academic progress toward a curriculum, degree or program, and enrolling at least half time for at least three consecutive terms in an academic year.

Requires HECC to apply waivers to applications in the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 academic years. Requires applications to be awarded in accordance with all other current statutes, rules, and policies.

BACKGROUND:

The Oregon Promise program was created by [Senate Bill 81 \(2015\)](#) and is the state's second-largest, state-funded financial aid program. Oregon Promise grants are available to Oregon high school graduates or students who pass the General Educational Development (GED) test, subject to certain eligibility requirements, and provides financial assistance for tuition and fees at Oregon community colleges. The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) administers the program and issues a [biennial report](#) that analyzes the program's progress and impact. [ORS 341.522](#), which governs the Oregon Promise program, requires students to enroll in community college courses within six months of graduating high school or passing the GED test.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities saw a dramatic decline in enrollment nationwide. According to data from the [National Student Clearinghouse](#), the decline was greatest among community colleges, which saw a 8.7% decrease in enrollment in fall 2020 and a further 6.9% decrease in fall 2021. In Oregon, the total number of students attending Oregon community colleges declined from 115,104 in 2019 to 88,247 in 2020, and

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continued to decline in 2021 and 2022, according to [student data from HECC](#). A HECC report on [2023 enrollment trends](#) showed that while enrollment at Oregon community colleges is rising, with a 7.3% increase in total enrollment and a 5.8% increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment in fall 2023, enrollment numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels.

PRELIMINARY