

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB1551

Honorable members of the Senate Committee on Education

Today, I stand before you as a staunch advocate for equitable access to education, to voice my unwavering support for Senate Bill 1551, a pivotal piece of legislation poised to dismantle barriers to higher education for numerous Oregonians who, through no fault of their own, found their academic journeys disrupted by the unprecedented global crisis of 2020 and 2021.

In the spirit of progressivism, where we strive for a society that prioritizes the well-being and advancement of all its members over the accumulation of wealth by a select few, SB 1551 represents a beacon of hope. This bill is not merely a legislative proposal; it is a declaration of our collective commitment to ensuring that every individual, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, has the opportunity to pursue higher education and, with it, a chance to contribute more fully to our society.

The essence of SB 1551 lies in its provision to waive the six-month enrollment requirement for the Oregon Promise grant for those who graduated high school or its equivalent in the tumultuous years of 2020 and 2021. This waiver, applicable to grants awarded in the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years, is a testament to our understanding and acknowledgment of the unique challenges faced by students during the pandemic—a time that upended lives and derailed educational aspirations.

By extending a helping hand through this bill, we recognize that the pursuit of knowledge should be a right, not a privilege confined to those who can afford it or those whose lives remain unaffected by global crises. Education is the cornerstone of personal development and a critical driver of societal progress. In supporting SB 1551, we are investing in our greatest resource—our people. We are fostering a future where the leaders, innovators, and thinkers of tomorrow are not held back by temporary setbacks today.

Moreover, declaring an emergency to ensure the immediate effectiveness of this bill underscores the urgency of addressing the educational delays caused by the pandemic. It is a clear signal of our dedication to swift and decisive action in the face of adversity, embodying the principle of responding to the needs of the community with empathy and efficiency.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the profound impact that SB 1551 will have on the lives of countless Oregonians. By supporting this bill, we are not only facilitating

access to education but also reinforcing our commitment to social justice, equality, and the betterment of our society as a whole. Let us unite in passing SB 1551, affirming our belief in the transformative power of education and our resolve to emerge stronger from the challenges of the past.

Thank you for your attention and your dedication to the people of Oregon.

Respectfully,
Devon Lawson-McCourt
Associated Student Body Business Manager
11th Grade Class Treasurer