



# Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

**Higher Education Coordinating Commission**

Office of the Executive Director

3225 25th Street SE

Salem, Oregon 97302

[www.oregon.gov/HigherEd](http://www.oregon.gov/HigherEd)

April 2, 2025

Co-Chair, Senator Janeen Sollman  
Co-Chair, Representative Ricki Ruiz  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Education

Dear Co-Chairs Sollman and Ruiz,

Thank you for the opportunity to answer questions that arose during the **April 1, 2025** Higher Education Coordinating Commission presentation to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education.

**On slide 73**, Rep. Wright asked how many school districts are served by the Outdoor School program, which is funded via the Sports Lottery. According to the School District Provider List compiled by the OSU Extension Service Outdoor School, there are 47 participating school districts. Additional information about Outdoor School sites and participating districts can be found through the [Outdoor School Explorer webpage](#).

**On slide 78**, Sen. Frederick asked about the potential impacts of discontinued funding for Institution Benefit Navigators in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB). The Benefit Navigators program was created after the passage of HB 2835 (2021) and began serving students in 2022. All 24 public institutions have a Benefits Navigator, and in 2024, the program served 18,020 students statewide. Although these positions are not funded in the GRB, the statutory requirement for the positions at public institutions remains. Additional outcomes from the program are included in Appendix A.

**Also on slide 78**, Sen. Frederick asked about the elimination of the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in the GRB. The use of the NCRC has declined greatly since the elimination of the Essential Skills requirement to earn a high school diploma. In 2019, 53 schools participated in NCRC testing, compared to 31 schools in 2024. Only 3,027 Oregon students earned the certification last year, or approximately 25 percent as many as a decade ago. Appendix B contains additional data about NCRCs earned over time.

*Correction*

During the hearing, **on slide 81** related to HECC's POP 104 and Future Ready Oregon funding, we stated that not all American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have been obligated. At this time, all ARPA funds have been obligated through December 2026.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Kyle Thomas, Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs, at [kyle.thomas@hecc.oregon.gov](mailto:kyle.thomas@hecc.oregon.gov) or at 503-480-9596.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Cannon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ben Cannon  
Executive Director

## Appendix A: Benefit Navigators Program Outcomes

| Year | Number of Students Served (Statewide)* | Other Program Outcomes  |
|------|--|---|
| 2021 | N/A                                    | Program created after passage of HB 2835.   |
| 2022 | 7,961                                  | All 24 public institutions hired first Benefits Navigator. Community of practice convened regularly.  |
| 2023 | 13,373                                 | Strengthened partnerships with state and local partners. Increased awareness of the program within institutions and communities.  |
| 2024 | 18,020                                 | Improved outcomes tracking. Continued collecting student feedback and centering student voices to inform promising practices, presentations, case studies, and promotional materials. |

*\*Yearly totals are not de-duplicated, so students who received services in multiple years are counted in the total for each year they participated.*

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| <b>Total Referrals to Benefits Services (2021-2024)</b>  | <b>22,224</b> |
| Referrals to Internal College Offices or Systems         | 13,891        |
| Referrals to Community Partners                          | 3,634         |
| Referrals to Oregon Portal for Self-Sufficiency Benefits | 2,602         |
| Referrals to Government Agencies                         | 2,097         |

Appendix B: Oregon Data, National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRCs) Earned by Year, 2013 – 2024

Oregon Data, NCRCs earned by year 2013 – 2024

