

SB 785 -2, -3 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 3/10, 4/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure creates the Agriculture Education Scholarship Program. It requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to provide a scholarship to cover the costs of tuition and fees for prospective agriculture educators who will serve in a rural community for at least the number of years as they were enrolled in the qualifying agriculture degree program. Should the prospective educator fail to complete the degree or fail to complete the service agreement, the prospective educator must repay the scholarship amount received. The measure provides exceptions to the scholarship repayment and provides methods for the HECC to collect the amount due. The measure appropriates a unspecified amount from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and becomes operative in the 2026-2027 academic year.

Fiscal impact: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.

Revenue impact: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Agriculture workforce development
- Other opportunities available
- Applicant location after Oregon

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-2 The amendment adds definitions for agriculture degree, agriculture educator, and institution of higher education.

-3 The amendment replaces the measure. It defines agriculture program, agriculture teacher, and qualified student. The amendment establishes the Agriculture Education Scholarship Program in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) and allows HECC to adopt rules to award grants to qualified students, identify qualified agriculture programs, and criteria to award the grants. It limits grants to one full-time academic year. The amendment applies to the 2026-2027 school year. It appropriates \$1 million from the General Fund to HECC to administer the program.

BACKGROUND:

The [Oregon Department of Education](#) divides career and technical education (CTE) into nine career pathways. Agriculture education, plant/agronomy/horticulture systems, natural resources systems, and food products and processing are four of those career pathways. These CTE courses prepare students for diverse post-high school education and training opportunities including direct employment, apprenticeships, and college degree programs.

According to the [Higher Education Coordinating Commission \(HECC\)](#), there are 7,419 students enrolled in agriculture and natural resource degrees at public universities. According to the [2022 US Census of Agriculture](#), during the 2022 year, there were 21,898 new or beginning farmers. In the same report, Oregon had 35,547 farms and sold over \$6.7 billion worth of agriculture products. The report showed that 96 percent of farms in Oregon are family farms and 13 percent of Oregon farms sell directly to consumers.