



Legislative Fiscal Office
 83rd Oregon Legislative Assembly
 2025 Regular Session

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 Reviewed by: Kim To
 Date: March 12, 2025

Bill Title: Relating to the Strong Start Program; declaring an emergency.

Government Unit(s) Affected: Higher Education Coordinating Commission, Public Universities

Summary of Fiscal Impact

2025-27 Biennium	General Fund	Lottery Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	Positions	FTE
Higher Education Coordinating Commission	\$ 8,709,867	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,709,867	1	0.44
Total Fiscal Impact	\$ 8,709,867	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,709,867	1	0.44

2027-29 Biennium	General Fund	Lottery Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Total Funds	Positions	FTE
Higher Education Coordinating Commission	\$ 8,734,527	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,734,527	1	0.50
Total Fiscal Impact	\$ 8,734,527	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 8,734,527	1	0.50

- The fiscal impact does not include duplicative Other Funds expenditure limitation necessary to expend General Fund revenue deposited by the measure into the Strong Start Program Fund. Additional Other Funds expenditure limitation will be needed to properly budget for the impact of this measure if it is adopted.

Measure Description

The measure establishes the Strong Start Program (Strong Start) within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to provide academic support and comprehensive services for first-year and underrepresented students at public universities, including community building, summer programs, academic programs, and wraparound supports. The measure establishes the Strong Start Program Fund, which is continuously appropriated to HECC to carry out the measure’s provisions. The measure directs HECC to distribute moneys from the fund to seven public universities through a formula based on first-year students representing targeted populations who are federal Pell Grant eligible, rural, underrepresented, or veterans.

The measure includes a blank General Fund appropriation to HECC in the 2025-27 biennium to carry out the measure’s provisions. The measure also includes a \$700,000 General Fund appropriation to HECC in the 2025-27 biennium to distribute \$100,000 each to the seven public universities for staffing and administration of Strong Start.

Fiscal Analysis

In response to the academic disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legislature provided one-time funding of \$12.2 million General Fund in the 2021-23 biennium for Strong Start at Oregon’s seven public universities. The Strong Start investment allowed each university to administer a collection of individualized programs to meet the specific needs of their students. The programs included early move-in to campus, peer

mentoring, tutoring, intensive academic supports (especially in math and writing), academic advising, note-taking skills, time management, and financial literacy. The Strong Start investment was intended to support university efforts to ameliorate any preparation gaps for incoming university students affected by the disruption of the pandemic. The population to be targeted with these funds were 2020 high school graduates who did not attend college in the 2020-2021 school year, as well as high school graduates who enrolled in college and were adversely impacted by the pandemic with reduced academic load, financial distress, and poor grades. For the 2023-25 biennium, the Legislature reauthorized \$6.8 million in reversion dollars, on a one-time basis, to complete the program. The \$6.8 million reflected the unspent funds provided by the Legislature for Strong Start in the 2021-23 biennium.

The measure evolves Strong Start into a program that provides comprehensive services, which will be determined by HECC through rulemaking, to support first-year and underrepresented students at public universities. Based on the public university funding model of targeted population FTE for Fall 2022 and a per student cost of \$1,950 to \$2,049, the public universities estimate the total student costs for this program to be \$7.8 million per biennium for all seven universities. The amount each university receives from HECC will depend on the number of targeted populations served. In addition, the measure includes \$700,000 General Fund for HECC to distribute \$100,000 to each of the seven universities for staffing and administration of Strong Start.

HECC will be responsible for rulemaking and administering the program. To handle this increase in workload, HECC will need one permanent, part-time Operations and Policy Analyst 3 position (0.44 FTE) to oversee rulemaking, grant management, and program management. The estimated cost of this position, including position-related services and supplies, is \$163,746 General Fund in the 2025-27 biennium and \$188,406 General Fund in the 2027-29 biennium.

The estimated total fiscal impact of this measure is \$8.7 million General Fund in the 2025-27 and 2027-29 biennia. However, it should be noted that although the measure establishes the Strong Start Program Fund as a continuously appropriated fund from which HECC will distribute grant funds and cover its administrative costs, the measure does not provide HECC additional Other Funds expenditure limitation, which will be needed to properly budget for the impact of this program. The measure also does not specify whether interest earnings in the Strong Start Program Fund will be credited to the fund.

Relevant Dates

The measure declares an emergency and takes effect on July 1, 2025.