



House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce Development
February 4, 2025

Re HB 2586 Relating to nonresident tuition exemption for asylum seekers

Testimony submitted by:

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Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is Britt Conroy, and I serve as Director of Public Policy for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. EMO is a statewide association of congregations, denominations and interfaith partners, connecting us with 750 faith communities across the state. We also serve communities across Oregon through our seven direct service programs, while seeking long-term solutions through national, state and local public policy advocacy. Our direct service programs support refugees and immigrants, food insecure people, low-income people living with HIV, unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence.

EMO fully supports HB 2586. This bill would allow Oregonians who have lived in this state, often for years, to qualify for in-state tuition as they await the outcome of their pending applications for asylum. Currently, students with pending asylum applications must pay non-resident tuition fees that are typically three times higher than what other students pay – an insurmountable amount that many simply cannot afford.¹

¹ Tuition at the University of Oregon for the fall of 2024, for example, is \$16,137 for resident students and \$44,598 for non-residents. “Cost of Attendance,” University of Oregon, https://financialaid.uoregon.edu/cost_of_attendance; See also Melanie Hanson, “Average In-State vs. Out-of-State Tuition” EducationData.org, April 28, 2022, <https://educationdata.org/average-in-state-vs-out-of-state-tuition>

We recommend passage of HB 2586 so that these students can enjoy the same access to higher education as their fellow Oregonians.

By granting access to in-state tuition, enrollment at public colleges and universities can grow, increasing tuition revenues for struggling institutions. For Oregon, a skilled and educated workforce can help address labor shortages and strengthen the economy.

Last May, our trusted partners at the Refugee Advocacy Lab provided valuable [testimony](#) about the need for access to in-state tuition for asylum seekers in Oregon, and we urge you to look at the Lab's written testimony for this bill.

Finally, we urge members of this committee to support identical companion bills SB 703 and HB 2788, which would make sure that the Oregonians we are discussing today have the legal aid they need while seeking asylum or other pathways to protection, if eligible under federal law.

By passing HB 2586, Oregon would join a growing list of states that provide access to in-state tuition to asylum seekers. These states recognize that asylum seekers can live, work, pay taxes, and otherwise contribute to their states for years, but be barred from pursuing their educational dreams.

For young people seeking safety in this country, passing this legislation sends an important message of welcome and belonging during a time when so many are fearful and worried about their futures.

EMO is proud to stand with young people seeking safety in this country, and we urge you to ensure all residents have equal access to in-state tuition and the freedom to pursue higher education.

Thank you.

Britt Conroy
Director of Public Policy
EMO