



The School of Business

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

**Before the Senate Committee on Education
February 10, 2025 Hearing on SB 796**

Testimony of Dr. Elizabeth Almer
Chair, Board of Accountancy Pipeline Committee

Chair Sen. Frederick, Vice-Chair Sen. Weber, members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Dr. Elizabeth Almer. I am a CPA (California) and have been an accounting professor at Portland State University since 2001 and since 2018 have acted as a liaison between the Oregon Board of Accountancy and the major Oregon college and university accounting programs. Since 2023 I have served as the Chair of the Oregon Board of Accountancy Pipeline Committee (the Committee). Thank you for allowing me to testify briefly on SB 796.

This fiscally responsible program seeks to reduce financial barriers for Oregon students pursuing accounting education and professional CPA licensure—creating a stronger workforce and fostering economic growth.

The Committee behind this proposal, formed in the summer of 2023, includes representatives from major Oregon educational institutions including Portland Community College, Oregon State University, Portland State University, University of Oregon, and University of Portland. This broad representation ensures the scholarship program addresses the educational and workforce needs of our entire state.

If this bill is approved, scholarships will be distributed to applicants with the following preferences, all aimed at expanding Oregon's pipeline of qualified accounting professionals:

- **Commitment to CPA Licensure:** Applicants must express a clear intention to pursue CPA certification and work in Oregon—a critical requirement to ensure that our investment stays within the state.
- **Educational Flexibility:** Scholarships will be open to students pursuing associate, bachelor's, master's degrees, or certificates, whether full- or part-time. By including part-time students, we support individuals who are often balancing work and education, reflecting the values of perseverance and hard work.
- **Focus on Financial Need:** By prioritizing economically disadvantaged students, we ensure that deserving individuals who want to work hard and contribute to Oregon's economy have the opportunity to gain a quality education, regardless of their financial circumstances.
- **Merit and Performance Considerations:** Satisfactory academic performance will remain a key factor, promoting accountability and recognizing the value of hard work in the pursuit of educational goals.

This program offers numerous benefits to scholarship recipients and Oregon as a whole:

- **High Return on Educational Investment:** An accounting degree consistently provides one of the best returns on investment, leading to stable, well-paying jobs and career advancement opportunities.

- **Support for Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs:** CPAs are critical to the financial health and success of businesses of all sizes. From tax compliance to financial planning, they provide essential expertise that fuels business growth and stability.
- **Strengthening Oregon's Workforce:** Expanding the pool of qualified accounting professionals ensures that Oregon has a strong, educated workforce to meet the demands of a dynamic economy. CPA firms will have a larger pool of employees which will help access to accounting and tax services.
- **Maximizing Existing Resources:** By using surplus funds from the Board of Accountancy, this program responsibly deploys existing resources without increasing taxpayer burden.

This proposal represents smart, efficient governance and an investment in the hardworking students who will drive Oregon's economy forward. I urge you to support this measure and help secure a brighter, more prosperous future for our state. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.