

TO: Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Brees-Iverson and Members of the Committee

FROM: Brent Wilder, President  
Oregon Alliance for Independent Colleges and Universities

DATE: March 26, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 2735 - 1

I am writing on behalf of the Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities (The Alliance), which represents Oregon's independent, nonprofit higher education sector. The Alliance actively supports the success of our member colleges and universities, as well as their students and alumni.

We urge you to support HB 2735, with the -1 amendment, to **fix the funding** for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).

In 1999, the Oregon Legislature established the IDA program as a matched-savings initiative designed to help participants achieve their financial goals. These include homeownership, home repair, higher education, purchasing a vehicle, starting a business, and saving for retirement. The state matches participants' savings on a 5-to-1 basis, helping to make these life-changing dreams a reality. Over the past 25 years, more than 19,000 Oregonians have benefited from this program.

However, the state tax credit that funds the IDA program has not kept pace with inflation. Since 2009, the credit has been capped at \$7.5 million annually, while the costs associated with the goals of the participants—such as homeownership and higher education—have increased significantly. As a result, each participant now requires more funding to succeed, but the overall funding for the program has remained stagnant. Without legislative action, the IDA program will be forced to shrink by 50%, enrolling fewer than 500 people annually.

In 2007, The Alliance formed a partnership with Community and Shelter Assistance Corp. of Oregon ([CASA of Oregon](#)) to create an Education IDA program aimed at helping income-eligible Oregonians secure the lifetime asset of a college education. This Education IDA program, known as [E3: Earn, Educate, Empower](#), is a prime example of how The Alliance leverages both private donations and public resources. The program targets low-income and underserved populations, including students of color, first-generation students, DACA recipients, and non-native English speakers. It helps ensure that young people have equal access to the high-quality, personalized educational experience offered at Oregon's private, nonprofit institutions of higher education. Moreover, it advances The Alliance's goal of graduating financially literate students who are equipped to address the region's talent needs.

Since its inception, the E3 program has seen steady participation growth. To date, **895** students at Alliance member institutions have participated, with a total of **\$918,338** in student savings. The matching funds provided to these students' colleges amount to **\$5,174,808**.

One such participant is [Yeidi Michelle Ramos Mendoza](#), a graduate of the University of Portland. Yeidi credits the E3 Matched College Savings Program with playing a pivotal role in her journey to becoming the first in her family to graduate from college. She is just one example of how this program can change lives.

By passing HB 2735 -1, the Legislature can **fix the funding** and restore the IDA program to financial stability. I strongly urge you to pass this bill and ensure that more Oregonians have the opportunity to achieve their financial goals and secure a lifetime asset.