

Southern OREGON UNIVERSITY

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

TESTIMONY OFFERED ON HB 2649A

Offered by Marc Overbeck, Director of Government Relations

Good morning, Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Marc Overbeck, and I'm the Director of Government Relations at Southern Oregon University. I want to start by offering our thanks to Representative Evans for introducing this bill.

Last summer, Representative Evans led a delegation that included the presidents of each of Oregon's four Technical and Regional Universities and SOU's board chair Sheila Clough, the CEO of Mercy Flights. The presidents signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging cooperation to work toward agreements with Taiwanese universities and the Taiwanese government. This trip took place with the support and knowledge of Governor Kotek.

With the demographic cliff looming and enrollment trends among Oregon students projected to trend further downward, this bill represents an opportunity for the Technical and Regional Universities to both advance economic cooperation with East Asian nations, and work consistent with our mission of providing knowledge, critical thinking and economic opportunity for all.

HB 2649A, explicitly authorizes the four TRU universities to offer a tuition rate that is discounted from what would ordinarily be charged for a non-resident undergraduate student—specific to this purpose. The language in the amendment helps clarify that the bill is not intended to authorize TRUs to increase tuition for undergraduate students from Oregon beyond the current 5% cap set by the HECC without its permission. Rather, it is intended to help implement a specific program, for students from specific countries, who may wish to study in the United States at our institutions.

Once again, at a time of transition for public higher education and uncertainty around its funding, Oregon's Technical and Regional Universities are seeking creative ways to advance their missions and do good for Oregon and its people.

On behalf of Southern Oregon University and all of the TRUs, we urge the committee to pass HB 2649A—which is without fiscal impact—to the Floor of the Senate.