

# Education

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2/15/2021

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## Higher Education priority bills

We focus this week on the top three Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) priority bills for 2021. HECC has, through the Governor's office, introduced 11 bills on higher education and workforce topics. HECC's top three priority bills for this session are related to: Financial Aid Redesign, Youth Employment, and Credit Transfer. HECC presentations to the Legislature, as well as key documents and links are on their [2021 Legislative Resources web page](#).

[HB 2093](#)– Financial Aid Redesign: Student costs for public higher education are increasing significantly faster than wages and inflation. Oregon's principal need-based financial aid program has failed to adequately keep up with cost increases. More than three fourths of Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) recipients at the public universities and half at the community colleges cannot pay the expected cost of their education, even with their grants and scholarships, most institutional aid, earnings, and expected family contributions. The OOG covered 81 percent and 53 percent of tuition and fee costs at colleges and public universities, respectively, in 2008, but only covered 48 percent and 32 percent in 2018. Oregon also operates a second financial aid program,

the Oregon Promise serves Oregon students that enroll in a community college and meet academic requirements, regardless of need. However, the current design of the Oregon Promise leads to a disproportionate amount of the funds being awarded to students from middle- and higher-income backgrounds, as Pell and OOG dollars do not contribute to covering the cost of tuition for them. Over three-quarters of Oregon Promise funds go to students above the Pell Grant cutoff. By redesigning the Oregon Opportunity Grant and Oregon Promise financial aid programs and increasing funding to the requested levels, students with the greatest financial need will receive the greatest level of state support. When combined with federal aid, eligible students would receive aid in excess of tuition and fee costs at public institutions, meaning aid would be available for other items affecting the cost of attendance, such as: books, transportation, food, and housing. This approach is designed to reduce financial barriers that lead to lack of persistence among low-income students, and improve graduation rates.

[HB 2092](#)– Oregon Youth Employment Program: Oregon youth, particularly those from communities of color, rural communities, and generational poverty, lack access to career-connected learning opportunities. The proposal makes several changes to the Oregon Youth Employment Program to improve opportunities for underrepresented communities: adding a minimum wage requirement for interns in state work programs; adding requirements for inclusion of individuals from communities of color; consulting with communities of color in designing work programs; and targeting opportunities to in-demand occupations. It also requests better funding of youth employment programs.

[SB 76](#)– Credit Transfer: On average, transfer students who earn a bachelor’s degree take eight more credits and are enrolled in school two semesters longer than university students who began as first-time freshmen. In 2017, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 2998, which directs HECC, community colleges and universities to streamline transfer pathways. Progress on this work has been made. However, HB 2998 did not set clear enough expectations for structural reform and course

alignment, firm enough deadlines for definitive action, or provide an accountability mechanism to ensure the work was completed. HECC says, “Without these elements, some of the transfer work becomes an exercise merely in drawing a better map to navigate complex transfer pathways, when it should instead be about building straighter roads.”

## Education bills recently heard

Public hearings in [House Committee on Education](#), [Senate Committee on Education](#), [House Committee on Early Childhood](#) considered these bills:

- Requiring the Oregon Department of Education to provide technical assistance to school districts in adoption and implementation of child sexual abuse prevention instructional programs ([HB 2828](#)).
- Appropriating money for the Educator Advancement Council to provide professional learning opportunities related to ethnic studies ([SB 227](#)).
- Directing the Oregon Department of Education to identify the most effective methods to diversify the educator workforce ([SB 232](#)).
- Directing the Office of School Facilities to administer a statewide facilities assessment program ([SB 55](#)).
- Requiring each community college and public university to hire a benefits navigator to assist students in determining eligibility for various public programs ([HB 2835](#)). Abundant [written testimony](#) and [verbal testimony](#) point to the need for navigators. LWVOR will follow budget implications before testimony.

In addition to following bills and writing supportive testimony on bills where LWV has Positions, we also watch bills that conflict with LWVUS or LWVOR positions. In past years we have testified against school vouchers that would dilute funding of public schools. We’re watching several (Oppose [SB 659](#), Support [HB 2954](#) and others). Oregon School Board Association (OSBA) [notes](#) that the existing 3% “cap” on virtual charter enrollment is the focus of at least six bills in the Oregon House and Senate that would raise the cap or remove it entirely. Some

legislators have dropped bills that would move policy in the opposite direction, adding further restrictions to virtual charters. These bills demonstrate conflicting education philosophies. The bills that would open student movement and raise caps would give students greater mobility at the cost of district stability and funding. The bills that would restrict movement would seek to strengthen local schools by preserving cohorts of students that represent the community. These are ideological conflicts, in Oregon and across the nation, around “school choice” and vouchers.

## Looking ahead

Beginning [2/17/2021](#) the [Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education](#) will begin weeks of presentations on the Governor’s Recommended Budget (GRB) and Policy Option Packages presented by the Legislative Fiscal Office, Early Learning, Oregon Education Department and Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Ultimately the larger Ways and Means Committee and the three co-chairs will determine available funding after the next revenue forecast and how to allocate the budget priorities between all of Oregon’s agencies/priorities. The “education” budget proposed in the GRB accounts for about 17% of an “all funds” budget. This newsletter went to editing on Friday 2-12-2021. The week of 2-15 and 2-22 watch OLIS hearings on:

- [SB 328](#) Prescribes requirements for annual school district and school performance reports, including requirement for inclusion of data related to suspensions and expulsions.
- [SB 236](#) Directs Early Learning Division to conduct study on use of suspension and expulsion in early childhood care and education programs and to report results of study to interim committee of Legislative Assembly related to education.
- [HB 2001](#) Requires school district that is making reductions in educator staff positions to retain teacher with less seniority if

teacher has more merit and if retention of teacher is necessary to maintain school district's diversity ratio.

- [HB 2368](#) Establishes pilot program to improve educational outcomes by using trauma-informed approaches to education, health services and intervention strategies.
- [HB 2408](#) Directs Department of Education to conduct study on meeting students' behavioral health needs and to report results of study to the interim committee of Legislative Assembly related to education by September 1, 2021.
- [HB 2330](#) Makes permanent school district funding for foreign exchange students and small school district grants.
- [HB 2152](#) Makes permanent small school district grants and school district funding for foreign exchange students.
- [HB 2051](#) Broadens eligibility of youths who may participate in statewide youth reengagement system. Expands list of entities the Youth Development Council must coordinate with when adopting rules for the system.
- [HB 2166](#) Directs Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene advisory group to review equity in the education system of state and to report results of review to the interim committee of Legislative Assembly related to education.
- [HB 2697](#) Requires education provider to prohibit use or display of any symbols of hate on school property or in education program.
- [HB 2631](#) Prescribes notification requirements for school district upon receipt of report of act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyberbullying.
- [HB 3073](#) Changes name of Early Learning Division to Early Learning Authority.
- [HB 2503](#) Expands eligibility for certain child care subsidy programs.

Date, time and scheduled bills can be found here: [House Committee on Education](#), [Senate Committee on Education](#), [House Committee on Early Childhood](#), and [Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education](#)



## Volunteer on the LWVOR Education Portfolio Legislative Team.

Contact Chris Vogel Note: Chris is taking a sabbatical for international travel after the 2021 session. Without volunteers, LWVOR input on Education issues and Bills will be diminished.

In addition to watching hearings on OLIS and writing weekly Legislative Reports, we reach out (even during Covid isolation) to allies and coalitions also working on education improvements. If you have a passion for children, you may wish to research these links: [Our Children Oregon](#), [The Early Childhood Coalition](#), [Coalition of School Administrators](#), [Oregon School Board Administrators](#), [Oregon Education Association](#), Oregon [Department of Education](#), [Early Learning](#), [Higher Education HECC](#).