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**OREGON STATE SENATE**

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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2587

House Committee on Education

March 22, 2017

For the record, I am Senator Mark Hass of Senate District 14 representing Beaverton, Aloha in Washington County. Today I am testifying in opposition to HB 2587 because it removes Oregon's 40-40-20 goals for higher education attainment.

To provide a little background, Oregon's 40-40-20 goal was passed in 2011 as a package of higher education restructuring bills. It declares that the mission of all education after high school is to ensure that by 2025 at least 40 percent of Oregonians have earned a bachelor's degree, at least another 40 percent have earned an associate's degree, and the remaining 20 percent or less have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent.

While it is ambitious, the 40-40-20 goal has become an attitude as much as a goal. The 40-40-20 goal has permeated discussion in all circles of K-12 and post-secondary education. It signals Oregon's seriousness in preparing young people for the higher skill demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. It signals Oregon's commitment to a new system that is designed on outcomes.

Even if we do not achieve it, the 40-40-20 goal is already effectively serving its purpose.

We know Students who earn an associate's degree are: 1) able to earn an important credential that helps make them more competitive when applying for jobs and 2) more likely to eventually complete a four-year degree.

Accordingly, Oregon's universities partnered with community colleges to create the Project Oregon Reverse Transfer Program. Established in the fall of 2012, the Reverse Transfer Program allows students enrolled at a four-year institution to transfer back credits to earn two-year degrees from participating community colleges.

This partnership formed without direct Legislative action, but instead was an organic response to the 40-40-20 goals. It is, perhaps, the clearest instance of how Oregon's attitude toward higher education attainment shifted to focus on outcomes rather than just aspiration.

Unfortunately, the aim of HB 2587 is to eliminate the 40-40-20 goal and replace it with less ambitious language ensuring only that high school graduates "are given the opportunity to attain" either an associate's degree or bachelor's degree or higher.

I'm not sure what the desire is or what problem is being addressed by HB 2587, but I am sure the 40-40-20 goal has had a positive impact on Oregon's higher education system, students, and economic outlook. I am equally sure repealing the 40-40-20 goals, as HB 2587 would, will cause much of Oregon's progress in higher education to stagnate or worse. I urge you, Chair Doherty and members of the House Committee on Education, to let HB 2587 die in committee.