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To: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

From: Gus Smith

RE: HB 2998

Chair Reardon, Vice Chairs Alonso Leon and Whisnant, Members of the Committee,

My name is Gus Smith, I attend Lane Community College and I am an intern for the Oregon Student Association. Thank you for the time to share my own experience and testimony on a subject that has been a central issue in my own life. I have attended Lane Community College in Eugene Oregon for the past year and a half and I have accumulated around 100 credits. This is my second stint with community college, and I am eager to transfer to the University of Oregon in the Fall.

A critical issue facing students, and community college students in particular, is the aspect of time. I am 24 years old which, by standards of the ever more competitive job market has new responsibilities and expectations that did not exist a generation before. I fear for my own clock, for the closing window into a viable job market, and for the eclipse of the chance to build a profession of my vision, independent from the dictation of will other than my own.

I have found academic and professional purpose in the Law, and a direction that will lead me from Lane Community College to the University of Oregon to pursue a degree in political science. I have been a devoted student and will maintain the whole of my credits upon transfer from Lane to the U of O. My credits however, are not considered "upper division" meaning that courses taken at Lane, in terms of their value, are worth less compared to some identical courses offered at a four-year university, which means I will inevitably have to repeat those same courses after my transfer. My current internship for OSA instance will have to be repeated at the University of Oregon as an upper level course. This is unsettling as a student, and as someone who would sooner start a career than stay in school.

I attended a community college in order to save money, to take courses I knew would be both useful and economical to my personal goals. Yet, if I knew the extent to which I would be taking identical courses adjusted only to the increased cost of a four-year university, I would have been less inclined to meddle away at a junior level and would have welcomed taking on the increased debt for the sake of my own time. This issue comes down to the intent of the university. Lane and the U of O are compatible and share a variety of direct programs and transfers. But to require students to retake essentially the same classes is entrepreneurial, corporate, and against the spirit of education. An initiative to remedy the current attitude toward transferable credits in public colleges and universities would encourage students to engage in academia at all levels of higher education.



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Sponsoring Universal Credit Transfer in order to create an effective and accessible program for students of all educational levels allows them to pursue their own avenue of education without fear of wasted time and money. The idea of spending my own limited resources is frightening, but an inevitable cost in a path to a degree. Yet for those at community colleges, for those who now come to the table with a greater notion of themselves and what they would do with their lives, education needs to be easier. School should be hard, it should be an endurance, and the challenges of education are a lesson in the merits of perseverance. However, in the face of increased tuition rates across the public college and university system, for the sake of college students some small aspect of education needs to change in order to continue to grow Oregon's educated public. House Bill 2998 is a small recognition that the struggles of student debt and a narrowing workforce are debilitating issues for those pursuing higher education, and Universal Credit Transfers is a small step in conserving both money and time for students. We need our general credits to be universally transferable to all public colleges and universities in Oregon.