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OCCA Testimony on SB 668
Feb 6, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 668. For the record, I'm John Wykoff Deputy Director of the Oregon Community College Association, which serves Oregon's 17 community colleges.

Let me begin by stating unequivocally that Oregon's community colleges fully support the goal of SB 668: making post-secondary education and training accessible and affordable for disabled veterans and their families. Our colleges are committed to serving those who have given so much for our country, and we deeply value the contributions of veterans in our classrooms and communities.

SB 668 proposes a first-dollar tuition waiver for veterans who are 80 percent or more disabled, as well as their spouses and dependents. This means that tuition would be fully waived before applying other forms of financial aid, such as the Pell Grant or the Oregon Opportunity Grant. While we appreciate this approach, we are still working to fully understand the financial implications for our colleges.

Nationally, about 30 percent of disabled veterans are classified as 80 percent or more disabled. The potential number of students who may qualify under this bill could be significant, and community colleges want to ensure we can sustainably support these students while maintaining the programs and services they rely on. Like the sponsors of SB 668, we believe that veterans and their families deserve guaranteed access to higher education. However, implementing this program comes at a cost.

For that reason, we respectfully ask the Legislature to consider at least sharing the cost of implementation with our colleges. A state partnership in funding this program would help ensure that we can continue providing high-quality education to veterans while also maintaining financial stability for our institutions.

Again, we support the intent of SB 668 and are eager to work with the Legislature to make it a success. Thank you for your time and consideration.