



April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

To: House Committee on Education  
From: Mariana Sofia Paredones  
RE: HB 3280

Chair Doherty, Vice-Chairs Alonso Leon & Helt, and Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Mariana Sofia Paredones and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Student Association and the thousands of students across the state in support of HB 3280: Voting Rights for Students, Faculty and Staff. I got my start in higher education at Lane Community College in Eugene back in 2014 and got involved with serving students as a Senator to the student government and Oregon Students of Color Coalition board. This is where I learned about the importance of creating space for issues happening to students on our campus and across the state as we have civically engaged over 45-50,000 students in voter registration campaigns, passed numerous policy, and fought for affordability. Student autonomy is a quintessential core to education and a pillar in shared governance, especially when issues impacting students are on the table. This is something I hold true and something I endured in my time on the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

I was appointed as the Community College Student Representative in July 2016 by Governor Kate Brown with the intent of providing representation as a low-income, 1st gen, immigrant womxn of color. Previous advocacy I had done with the HECC was on House Bill 3308 Cultural Competency Workgroup and felt the collaborative decision making within the group made me feel I could make a difference on the HECC. There were several meetings where certain topics at hand would be voted on and while I expressed my voice as a student at those meetings not having a vote or privilege to add things to the table left me feeling disempowered. I was in a room with people that were making decisions on things that directly impacted me and my peers, most notable were the meetings that determined the cost of education.

In our May 2017 meeting universities that had proposed tuition increases above 5% came to the HECC to present their claims for those increases with university lobbyists and hand-picked student testimonies in support of the increases. On the counter side was a striking presence of the room filled with students that had traveled from across the state, taking time out of class and work to be there. Testimonies on how the tuition increases would price out vulnerable students was heartbreaking to say the least, to see the way the votes went was excruciating. I was there to represent students and felt it was impossible to do so when you can't vote on the things that I deserved to have a say in. The pain I felt to feel silenced in this important conversation stings till this day. Which is why I wanted to use my voice I wish could have been

**OREGON STUDENT ASSOCIATION**

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more heard in the HECC to the legislature today and ask for your support for HB 3280. So that the future representation of students on the HECC can actually be lifted in the space that is supposed to be meant for the betterment of our state. I hope you remember my testimony as someone who's been in this position before and believes in the potential the HECC could provide if the voting was shared equally with student representatives.

Thank you,  
Mariana Sofia Paredones

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