



Testimony on House Bill 2091
House Education Committee
February 4, 2021

Chair Alonso Leon, Vice-Chairs Neron and Weber, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2091.

The HECC serves as the state board with responsibility for recommending to the legislature changes to community college service district boundaries. As you know from HECC's prior testimony, the general process for boundary changes includes a petition from local residents, a public hearing process, opportunities for rebuttal, and a Commission determination.

In January 2019, Commission staff was contacted by petitioners in northwest Lane County, one of the remaining territories of the county not currently incorporated into a community college service district, requesting to circulate a petition to incorporate the territory. The petitioners, Hans and Karin Radtke, are residents of the unincorporated territory, and prior to the request to circulate, had appeared before the Legislature in partnership with former Rep. Caddy McKeown to discuss the issue of community college boundaries and their exclusion from the Lane Community College (LCC) Service District.

The northwestern portion of Lane County is sparsely populated, and the petitioners were required to submit only 14 valid signatures (10% of the population of registered voters). Staff affirmed the petitioners met the requirement in June 2019, and scheduled required public hearings in September in the territory and November at LCC. During the public hearing process, the Commission received no opposition to this proposal. The Commission took the additional step of sending a letter to the residence address of all registered voters and received no comments in opposition. Additionally, the LCC Board supports this proposal.

The Commission views its responsibilities in executing boundary changes through a couple of lenses. First, it believes that boundary changes are a local question, and wishes to see evidence of local support. Second, the Commission generally favors ensuring that all Oregonians have access to higher education. The order issued by the Commission in November of last year to incorporate this territory into the LCC district respects these principles.

The current primary benefit to the residents of the currently unincorporated territory is that they will be able to participate in elections for the LCC Board of Education, establishing the territory has a say in college operations. Additionally, as constituents of the service district, residents would be ensured access to the college's in-district tuition rate, though currently Lane does not charge an out-of-district differential.

The Commission hopes you will support HB 2091, and I thank you for your time today.