

Chair Wagner, Co-Chair Girod, and members of the committee,

My name is Imani Dorsey and I am here today to speak in support of SB 854 and encourage you all to vote YES on this bill which will implement much needed, positive reforms and clarifications to the Board of Trustees at public universities across the state to work towards ensuring that these decision-making bodies exercise greater transparency and accountability in their function.

I am a University of Oregon alum, graduating in 2019, and having served in the Associated Students of the University of Oregon AKA the UO student government in the capacities of a State Affairs Coordinator and as a Vice President. During my time at the UO and in the student government, the main issue I worked on was tuition advocacy and I eventually served on the tuition and fee advisory board for two years. Despite my increased proximity to the Board of Trustees, I pretty much stayed at the same level in terms of my ability to access these individuals and felt that there was a lack of opportunity for meaningful dialogue and collaboration about the most pressing issues that the board deals with of tuition, the university budget, and their other fiduciary responsibilities. In recalling my experiences advocating at the University of Oregon, I just remember the deep divisions between the Board of Trustees, administration, the campus community, and even the legislature. With the proposed measures in this bill, I believe that we can begin to bridge the gap.

The board of trustees makes incredibly important decisions that drastically impact every stakeholder of these public universities so it only makes sense that their decision-making processes are transparent. I support all measures of this bill but I want to highlight three parts that are the most notable for me as I reflect on my time as a student:

Adding a requirement that board members will have publicly-available official email addresses opens up a new avenue for trustees to hear directly from campus stakeholders which can directly impact the level of accountability

At the University of Oregon for example, there are trustees who don't live in the state or don't come to campus often, so how can they get a wider perspective of campus needs outside of information they receive from university administration? By requiring boards to give time in meetings for reports for faculty, staff and student government representatives, the board can hear from those who experience the conditions of the university on a daily basis.

Similarly, I appreciate that this bill wants to implement a requirement that the boards give time in meetings for faculty and staff union representatives. In serving on the tuition and fee advisory board, I learned how unionized labor on campus is a campus demographic that is particularly sensitive to the budget and I believe that by facilitating regular communication between unions and the board, greater trust can be built.

In closing, I want to say thank you to everyone who has worked on this important policy. I am pleased to see these common-sense reforms being considered as an alum who has experienced and seen all over campus the adverse impacts that this absence of trust can have and I have hope that this refining of governance on public universities will only continue in order to ensure that these boards function to best meet the needs of their campus communities and the state.