

My name is Kathleen Stanley. I am a Senior Instructor in Sociology at OSU where I have taught for 26 years. I am also the President of United Academics of Oregon State University, the faculty union at OSU. I'm here to testify in support of SB 854. I urge you to pass this legislation during this session in order to expedite welcome and long overdue board reforms at both our universities and at the HECC.

Recent events at OSU make clear what happens when the Board is out-of-touch with the university community. Our ousted former president was hired through a highly secretive process with minimal involvement from faculty, staff, or students. Based on media reports about his time at LSU and his lackluster response to those reports while at OSU, it became clear that he was not a good fit for our university and was considered unacceptable by a majority of faculty members. Yet, the Board's initial response was to delay and postpone, a clear sign that Trustees had little understanding of faculty sensibilities.

This made a bad situation far worse and caused real trauma for many members of the OSU community. It required a time-consuming, multi-front effort on the part of the entire campus—including a vote of no confidence against the Board—for Trustees to take the matter seriously and correct course. The residual anger from that experience must be addressed. SB 854 can be part of that process and prevent serious missteps down the road.

In truth, the strained relationship between the Board and faculty at OSU is the result of broader, systemic problems, rather than simply failings of this particular Board. Like most Boards of Trustees, OSU's Board is largely isolated from the university community and dependent on the administration for information. Trustees cannot make the best decisions when their information is limited and filtered through the very administration they are supposed to be overseeing.

Faculty have vital input, important questions, and firsthand experience. Yet, the only interaction that UAOSU has had with the Board has been our appearances—in 3-minutes or less—during public comments at their quarterly meetings, after which the only response we receive is 'thank you for sharing.' I have every reason to believe the same is true of the Board's interactions with SEIU—representing classified staff—and CGE—representing graduate student employees.

When Trustees do not hear reports from OSU's employee unions and when direct email communication is unavailable, we have the kind of gatekeeping that produces poor decision making and the kind of failed leadership that causes faculty, staff, students, community members and even legislators to lose faith.

Moreover, Boards—both at universities and at the HECC—should reflect the universities they serve. When the Board is not comprised of a representative cross-section, members have an incomplete and thus skewed idea of not only what is actually happening, but also what resolutions are available. This serves no one's long-term interests.

Oregon's seven public universities face different, evolving challenges that cannot possibly be represented by one faculty voice. Faculty need greater representation if the HECC is to accomplish its mission for Oregon. Similarly, graduate students have experiences far unlike undergraduate students. They deserve to be heard and to have a vote.

SB 854 will bring the board reforms we need most at our universities and at the HECC. We have an unprecedented opportunity to reconsider and improve upon the way we've done things in the past. This is true in government, public health, K-12 and even higher education. Empowering boards to better represent those they serve, make more informed decisions that affect so many, and to lead with greater integrity than previously allowed is an opportunity we shouldn't pass up. Please approve SB 854.