

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and members of the Senate Rules Committee,

My name is Liz Marquez, I am the outgoing Senate President at the student government at Western Oregon University and a board member for OSA and I am testifying in support of SB 854, and the -2 amendments along with it.

SB 854 implements much needed, small, reasonable reforms to our current Board of Trustees structure. Having been in student government at WOU for a number of years, I can tell you this policy didn't come out of nowhere. When I see the provision of this bill, it is a direct reflection of the struggles students at Western and across Oregon have faced this year and in previous years since the creation of the Board of Trustees model.

This year, as you may have seen in multiple news stories, was rough for students, faculty, and staff at WOU. We have not empowered our decision makers on these boards of trustees to hear directly from the students, faculty, and staff that their important decisions are directly impacting. How can we expect our Trustees to make decisions that are in the best interests of students and community members when access to them is gate kept by the administration? Students do not have direct access to trustees, or even access to get on the agenda for the BOT meetings at the school where we pay tuition and which is meant to serve us. My amazing colleagues and I have spent countless hours fighting to be heard by decision makers on our campus this year which we should have spent studying and working. Students, faculty and staff are at the heart of our institutions and our voices and needs deserve to be heard.

That is why SB 854 is so important to me-- it sets up administrators, trustees, students, faculty, staff, and our institutions as a whole for success. This is a big conversation, and perhaps there are those who believe more conversation is needed after this session, and I completely agree. But the provisions within SB 854 with the -2 amendments included are sound policy, highly implementable, cost the state nothing, and frankly are how things should have been done all along.

I urge you to pass SB 854. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Liz Marquez