

June 3, 2021

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Girod, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the over 16,000 AFT-Oregon members represented at educational institutions across our state, I am proud to speak today in strong support of SB 854 and the -2 amendment, and I thank the sponsors of this legislation for bringing it before you all today.

It is unfortunate that we find ourselves in a place where many of the common sense provisions in SB 854 must be mandated by law, but this circumstance is emblematic of the many challenges our current public university governance structures have created.

SB 854 is a vital tool to help make Oregon University's Board of Trustees more accessible and accountable to the public, including the faculty, staff, and students who are the lifeblood of our public institutions.

Since the inception of our current university governance structure, we have seen time and time again institutional boards failure to act in a compelling way to address several campus leadership crises, enact accountability and transparency measures requested by faculty and students, and ultimately commit to shared governance principles. SB 854 is a step in the right direction at addressing many of these challenges, and an opportunity for the Oregon Legislature to start a conversation about the changes needed to our current public university governance structure.

I urge this committee to pass SB 854 in its current form, or as amended by the -2 amendment, because action from the legislature is desperately needed at this critical moment, so we can begin to address the governance challenges at our public universities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you all today, and I look forward to working with you all on this important issue going forward.

Jaime Rodriguez  
President, AFT-Oregon