



Senator Dembrow, Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 273

February 16, 2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Kathleen Stanley, and I am a Senior Instructor in Sociology at Oregon State University where I have taught for 28 years. I am also the President of United Academics of Oregon State University, our faculty union. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 273. I urge you to pass this legislation with the proposed amendments and expedite welcome and overdue board reforms for both individual universities and the HECC.

When Senator Dembrow began the process of formulating what is now SB 273, he convened a workgroup composed of faculty, staff, students, university administrators, and trustees. Through numerous meetings this diverse group of stakeholders were able to share their perspectives about the ways the Boards currently function and the kinds of reforms that were necessary and/or unwanted. While all members of the workgroup want what is best for our universities there was, unsurprisingly, disagreement about the policies and processes that would lead to those best outcomes. SB 273 represents the distillation of those divergent viewpoints. It is not the entirety of what each group might want but is a necessary compromise that will provide a foundation for moving forward together.

It is this type of process that is needed at our universities. At OSU, for example, the Board of Trustees interacts only with the administration and with select groups that have been designated by the Board as part of shared governance. The campus labor organizations are not included even though our work helps to establish many of the policies and procedures that constitute the social structure of the university. UAOSU, the faculty union, exists alongside of but is distinct from the Faculty Senate. The two organizations represent different groups of faculty and have responsibility for different, though overlapping, issues. A university cannot

function optimally when its Board of Trustees only hears from some members of the university community while excluding others from the conversation. But that is what happens at OSU.

Despite the OSU Board of Trustees signing on to the SB 854 MOU in a collective letter addressed to Senator Frederick, nothing in the relationship between the Board and the unions at OSU has changed. If we wish to address the Board, we are still relegated to three minutes of public comment during Board meetings with no follow-up beyond a cursory acknowledgement that we appeared before them. While the OSU Board apparently believes it is fulfilling the commitments made in the MOU letter, we do not. Other Oregon public universities have chosen to interpret those promises in ways that are more inclusive of faculty and employee unions. The inconsistency of interpretations points to the need for legislation to establish a common set of expectations for the boards at all our universities. SB 273 will require the boards to engage more directly with employee unions, encourage better decision making, and add accountability in the fulfillment of those expectations.

This legislation will increase student membership on the boards and enlarge the participation of faculty, staff, and students in nominating the trustees from those groups. An important part of that process will be discussion among the organizations representing each group in an attempt to reach consensus on a nominee. UAOSU and the OSU Faculty Senate have already started preliminary discussions to establish the mechanisms through which we can identify nominees for the faculty trustee position. It is this spirit of communication and relationship building that SB 273 will enshrine at our universities.

More interaction, more engagement, and more collaboration are worthy goals and SB 273 is an important step in the right direction. Codifying the rights of students, staff, and faculty in university processes will strengthen our institutions. We have an unprecedented opportunity to improve upon the way we've done things in the past. Please approve SB 273.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathleen Stanley
President, United Academics of Oregon State University (AAUP/AFT Local 9609)