

MARK F. GAMBA
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 41



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 5, 2024

Chair Lively, Vice-chairs McIntire and Ruiz, and members of the House Committee on Higher Education:

My name is Mark Gamba and I am the representative for House District 41. Education, at its best, is a public good. It is funded by the public, accountable to the public, responsive to the needs and interests of the public, supports a thriving democracy, and ultimately affordable and accessible to average working class citizens.

Ten years ago the Legislative Assembly passed bills that closed statewide direction and authority of our public university system and created independent governing boards at each institution. A reasonable follow through would be to study, assess, and deeply consider the positives and negatives of this decision. A decade is a good time frame to see the direction our public university system is moving and consider next steps to further improve it.

Responsible government has the ability to provide oversight and manage the direction of public institutions, and this oversight has to be combined with collaborative direction and informed investment priorities. House Bill 4125 will collect available information and package it together alongside new information gathered to assess the direction our higher education workforce is headed, trends in student affordability and enrollment, the financial health and commitments the universities have made under this new fiduciary structure, and also look to states across the country to see what approaches they are taking in regards to public oversight to meet the challenges of today.

Public education, including public higher education, has great promise and potential. As a state, we absolutely need to make large investments in education. But we have to be sure that those investments are collaboratively directed and prioritized to benefit working class Oregonians, the employees and faculty who run these institutions every day, and that make our state an example of excellence. This bill will help make that happen.

I urge your support and passage of House Bill 4125.

Thank you,