



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

1/28/25

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Fragala and Harbick, and members of the committee:

Good morning, my name is Elizabeth McMurtry, I'm an academic professional employed at Portland State University and also the current VP for Legislative and Political Action for PSU's largest union.

Education is a public good. And only investment in the people of our public institutions, the faculty and workers who serve our students, can create a flourishing, thriving university. Public goods must come before profits. Our institutions of higher education are woefully underfunded and we must change that trend – we must invest in public education, it *must* be our priority because these students, our future, must be our priority.

While the state clearly has a responsibility to invest in our public universities, the PSU administration has itself not been upholding this responsibility. While continuously raising millions for capital projects, the administration has taken a harsh austerity approach when it comes to investing in PSU's actual mission – that of providing high quality, public education – and has already given termination notice to 17 faculty members, with more cuts promised. All this while mediation stalls and multiple new real estate development projects are underway. There is no indication this approach will do anything other than damage our students – both present and future.

We are all aware that we are standing at a critical precipice in political history. And no matter which side of the aisle we find ourselves on, one thing remains true: we are experiencing a monumental degradation of faith in our governing bodies. Now is not the time for business as usual – it has long been time for us to make bold moves to restore this faith. This starts by treating workers with respect and dignity at all levels, including our rights, benefits and pay, and extends continuously through prioritizing the public services, which is one of the main reasons governments exists.

With that I'd like to end by asking you to support **HB 3212, the Public University Foundation Sunshine Act**. This is a fiscally neutral bill that will bring public university foundations, like the PSU foundation at my own university, up to the public record standards already present in 22 other states including all of Oregon's neighbors.

Universities are underfunded, and Foundations are filling the gap; more information is needed to ensure programmatic success – Oregonians deserve public records access to build trust and ensure accountability. The bill recognizes that the University Foundations act as public bodies, using a public institution's name and likeness, and should therefore be subject to the appropriate transparency expectations. This bill is a straightforward, zero-dollar way to begin to help to restore that trust, so essential to the working environment that public institution employees like myself, and all my fellow union members, deserve. Thank you.

Elizabeth McMurtry
VP of Legislative and Political Action, PSU-AAUP