

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the committee,

My name is Joshua Hutchinson, and I am a non-voting Student Trustee on the Portland Community College Board of Directors. I'm testifying today in support of SB 478, specifically Section 4 clause 9, which requires community college Boards to have a voting student member.

I urge your support for this Bill as I believe it is a step toward real, meaningful shared governance in our community colleges. As PCC's Student Trustee, my role within our Board is to be the voice of the student body. While I recognize that our college has been incredibly supportive and receptive to students' voices this year, without the ability to vote that 'voice' is only symbolic. In many ways, our student government still relies on the goodwill and support of our administrators to participate in shared governance. Without their support, we have no guaranteed means by which students are represented within our college's administration, so we often find ourselves having to balance—even choose between—advocating for students and remaining agreeable to administrators.

Waiting for our administrators to *invite* us to participate is not the same as being guaranteed a voice—a real voice—within our Board of Directors. Nor does it offer student governments the autonomy to support causes and speak up without fear of losing future opportunities or the goodwill of our administrators. Student trustees are often supported when we are outspoken in support of students as long as this aligns with administrative priorities, but expected to bite our tongues when we have opposing interests or our position is inconvenient.

Board members, however, can disagree with one another and still function because their voices are *equal*. They can share their views without fear of retaliation. Extending this right to student Board members would grant our student trustees the autonomy and State support that we need to effectively represent our fellow students' voices in college decisions.

And we are not alone, either: Right now, not a single community college in Oregon has a *voting* student Board member. Only *three* of Oregon's seventeen community colleges even have a student Board member at all. Fourteen of our seventeen community colleges lack even a symbolic Student voice. Senate Bill 273 requires universities to have a voting graduate and undergraduate student. Two years later, this Bill would give community college student bodies that same right to representation.

To put it simply: Our Oregon legislature believes that *university* students are capable of participating fully as Board members, why should we at community colleges be any different? Students, whether at a university or community college, deserve to have their voices not only heard but represented—and to have that voice, we need a vote.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to adopt this legislation.

Joshua Hutchinson  
Student Trustee, PCC