

Submitter: Ken Hector
On Behalf Of: Chemeketa Community College
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB478

February 11, 2025
To: Senate Education Committee

Chair Frederick, and Committee Members:

For the record, I am Ken Hector, Silverton, OR, and Chair of the Chemeketa Community College Board of Education. In addition, I am also a member of the Board of the Oregon Community College Association. I am submitting this text testimony in opposition to SB 478 in its present form.

Community college boards of education are elected governing bodies like local school boards, city councils, county commissions and even the state legislature. No other elected governing body in Oregon has such a mandate from the legislature to have an additional board member who does not answer to the voters of their district, as all the elected board members do.

Community college boards all receive regular student input through non-voting board positions, student government association reports and other institutionalized forms of direct input. At Chemeketa, our student representative sits with the Board, presents a monthly report on behalf of the students, and is free to ask questions of the Board or administrative staff. There is no prohibition on students running for elected community college board positions. Students have run and won seats on community college boards in the past.

Community colleges are all about student success, and student voices are important. However, a voting board member that doesn't go before the voters of the district is incompatible with democratically elected governance. Only elected representatives vote in the Oregon Legislature, on school boards, county commissions, and even water and soil districts, and the same should apply to community college boards. SB 478 would also mean every board would have eight members, making governance more difficult as boards could not break tie votes.

SB 478 creates a requirement that community college boards vote to approve each statewide or national association the college joins. Community college boards already have the authority to create such a requirement. This requirement would simply amount to mandating board micromanagement. The Legislature has no such mandate for any other locally elected government entity or any of the public higher education boards or commissions.

Chemeketa does not oppose the provisions of the bill that mandates colleges provide board members with college emails and publicly post them, or allowing board members to receive a \$500-a-month stipend or get reimbursed. This section is permissive so boards may choose whether to adopt this policy.

For all of the above reasons, we respectfully urge the Senate Committee on Education to oppose SB 478 in its current form unless these issues are addressed through an acceptable amendment of the bill.

Ken Hector, Board Chair
Chemeketa CC Board of Education