

Submitter: Valdez Bravo
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB478

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Valdez G. Bravo (he/him/his) and I am writing today in support of Senate Bill 478. I am writing with the perspective of a former community college student, instructor, and as a former elected Board Trustee at Portland Community College.

A BIT ABOUT ME:

I was born in Portland, grew up in Salem, and am an Oregon native of Mexican and Standing Rock Sioux descent. I attended public schools and joined the Army out of high school in pursuit of a vocation, money for college, discipline, adventure, and to serve my country. Returning home after eight years in the Army and a brief deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), I went to work at the Portland VA by day -but at night I returned to school using my money from the Montgomery GI Bill. I first attended Portland Community College from 2004 to 2007, and then transferred to Portland State University where I earned an English Degree in 2009. These experiences led to graduate school and a rewarding career in healthcare administration. All I have done since the Army can be traced back to PCC.

These experiences motivated me to run for an Elected Board of Trustees seat in 2017, as I wanted to repay my debt to the school that I love so much, which gave me my start on an education and career after the Army.

BOARD SERVICE AT PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

I was elected in May 2017 and began serving in July, serving for several years. During this time I had the opportunity to immerse myself in all things PCC, to work closely on the Board and lead Board committees, and most importantly for the sake of my purposes writing here today: I had the chance to get to know, work with, and recognize the value of the Student Trustees.

The Student Trustees were elected from their own student body, drawing on the same principles of democracy that led me to serve in my own seat, but from the population of students enrolled at PCC rather than the wider community.

The power and impact of these Student Trustees cannot be understated. The Student Trustees I got to know during this time contributed in so many ways to the Board, to the college, and in doing so, to the community. I believe that student board

members should be voting members. This makes the role more impactful, more equitable, more real.

THE POWER OF STUDENT BOARD MEMBERS:

- 1) Student voices ensure that student perspectives are directly represented and centered across a variety of decision-making processes which address the needs and concerns of the college's largest stakeholder group - the students it serves. This diversity in governance creates more informed, more equitable, and more mission-driven outcomes.
- 2) Providing a student voice on the Board ensures that the student population feels heard on a variety of issues and topics that face the college board.
- 3) Students bring firsthand perspectives of campus life, social issues, challenges, economic barriers, and other aspects of the experiences facing students that the Board, Cabinet, Faculty, and Staff need to be aware of.
- 4) Students are excellent ambassadors and champions for the college as an organization and the inclusion of a student voice on the Board creates a more meaningful, less transactional approach to student representation on delegations and advocacy sessions.
- 5) Student board member opportunities promote civic-engagement and leadership development which provides the student with valuable leadership experiences. This empowerment may lead the student to take on other civic responsibilities as they learn first hand the power and benefit of democratic processes.

For all these reasons and more I am writing in support of SB 478. Please vote yes on this bill and create consistency, equity, and formalized student voices on Oregon's community college boards.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Valdez G. Bravo, FACHE
Lake Oswego, OR (HD38, SD19)