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Members of the Senate Committee on Education

900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

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

For the record, my name is Dr. Sam Schwartz, speaking as an individual citizen. I graduated last year with a PhD from the University of Oregon in computer science, and I write to you **in favor** of parts of SB 478, **in opposition** to other parts of SB 478, and *neutral* on the rest. On the whole, I am in favor of this legislation.

Where I stand in favor: adding a student voice to the board and posting email addresses.

As a public body, it is crucial that the public can contact decision-makers. Publicly posting email addresses where members of the public can contact board members is vital to the participatory process of policymaking. Posting email addresses should be made mandatory for those institutions which don't already do this basic trust-building practice.

I am strongly in favor of adding a student voice to the board. I myself was appointed by the governor to a (non-education-related) board to fill a student seat when I was a graduate student, and I was part of the legislative process last long session to add a voting graduate student seat to the boards of Oregon's public universities.

In my experience, the university boards and leadership were terrified of student (and faculty, and staff) seats on the board at first. Then legislation passed, these institutional members took their seats, and within a short period of time these new additions were deeply valued as fellow board members for the important perspectives they brought to the table – as a fellow board member and not only as a mere member of the community.

The student perspective, at the level of a full voting member, is needed for healthy institutions of higher education. Student trustees take their position very seriously. I appreciate concerns raised by other givers of testimony about student inexperience with governance bodies of large, complex institutions. I don't find their concern compelling given our experience at the universities. I see no issues with this legislation as is, and I urge its passage.

However, I want to acknowledge the concerns of those opposed – namely concerns about student inexperience and democratic process – and suggest a solution.

Addressing concerns about student inexperience. The solution is additive: two students should sit on the board, serving staggered two year terms. In their first year, a student sits as an observer of the board and learns the ropes. The second year, a student becomes a full voting member of the board.

Addressing concerns about democratic process. I also am a believer that members of a governing board ought to be appointed fiduciaries – not representatives. While it is important for these fiduciaries to have a variety of perspectives – including an appointed faculty, classified staff, as well as a student perspective – I am

in favor of appointments to be made by an executive with confirmation by a legislative body (e.g., governor or county chair, confirmed by the Senate or county commission, respectively). While this is not the tradition for Oregon's community colleges, it is the tradition of Oregon's universities, and I think worthy of consideration.

Therefore, while keeping seats elected for all other positions at the community college, as is Oregon's tradition, perhaps the name of the student produced by the student government is then submitted to the executive for their consideration for formal appointment. This way, there is a check to ensure that democratic process is upheld; that is, an elected official makes the final call on a student board member actually taking their seat.

With falling faith in our institutions – from higher ed to government writ-large – it is crucial that we aggressively recruit young people into the participatory decision-making process that is the hallmark of our democratic society, in the role of full-throated decision-makers. Again, I urge a student voice be added to the board.

Where I stand opposed:

The requirement for boards to approve the community college joining associations is micromanagement, and should be removed.

Where I stand neutral:

The \$500 stipend should be viewed as optional, not required. Community colleges face challenging budget situations and we should be providing more institutional budgeting flexibility, not less.

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Thank you for your consideration! I appreciate you reading through these remarks.

Sincerely,



Sam Schwartz
An Optimistic Oregonian