

February 13, 2025

Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessica Howard and I am the president of Chemeketa Community College

There is nothing more wonderful than students. They are the reason that people like me go into education in the first place – to facilitate curiosity, creativity, and the acquisition of knowledge; to create life-changing opportunities (especially for those who need it most); and to create positive social and economic change. In short, for an educator, students represent all the positive possibility that exists in the world.

I am not opposed to students sitting on a community college board. They are the primary – although not the sole – recipient of the work product of these institutions, and being on the board would ensure that their voice is articulated and heard (and on the record). However, mandating that a student trustee wields a vote on that board is inconsistent with democratic principles, and on this point I am in strong opposition with SB478. Consider this: the vast majority of community college students live in the college district, which means, under SB478, they get to vote twice – once for the trustee associated with their residential address, and once again for their student board member. For everyone else in the district, one person equals one vote. Because some citizens of the district vote once but others have the privilege of voting twice, the resulting board is not a fair representation of the community. No other publicly elected board functions this way in our state.

The other component of SB478 to which I am opposed is the requirement that community college boards determine the state or national associations to which the institution belongs. This is not a requirement for school boards, universities, city councils, special districts, or any other local governments in Oregon. In addition, community colleges already have authority regarding financial actions, so this is something any college board could elect to do. If other entities aren't subject to this kind of micromanagement, why should it be so for community college boards?

Concerning the other aspects of SB478 – mandating that colleges provide board members with college emails and publicly post them, and allowing board members to receive a \$500-a-month stipend or get reimbursed, which is permissive so boards may choose whether to adopt this policy – I have no issue whatsoever.

I urge you to amend SB478 in the two ways articulated above. In that case, you have my full support.

Thank you, and thank you for your service to our state.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jessica Howard, Ph.D.  
President/CEO