

Submitter: Lisa Avery  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB478

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee members:

I was in the queue to testify yesterday, as was my board chair and our student leadership president, but unfortunately we were not called. I understand that it was a very full hearing, and am instead submitting written testimony.

I oppose SB 478 and ask that it not move out of committee without substantial amendments.

Here are my reasons for opposition:

The bill is an unnecessary statewide response to the perceived lack of student input between some community colleges and their local boards. Many institutions already have multiple mechanisms in place for student input. Rather than change governance structure, a first step could perhaps be requiring a MOU to be in place to ensure transparency and valuing student voices on education boards.

This bill places unnecessary bifurcations between universities and community colleges at a time when higher education is under attack. University student board members are appointed by the Governor, similar to the process for appointing other members of those boards. Community college boards are elected by their communities.

As Sen. Sollman indicated in the hearing yesterday, K-12 boards do not have students voting; instead, they serve as ex officio members.

All 17 Oregon community colleges have committed to making sure their board email addresses are listed by March 1, 2025. Most of us already do; in fact, at LBCC, we list board member names, email addresses, zones, and even display photos of our board members so students can see who represents them. Student voice is indeed an imperative, but disrupting effective board structures is not.

I ask that you please consider the valuable input of the many current locally elected board members who raised concerns in testimony today and also those who provided written testimony against this bill. They all take their role, and student voices, very seriously. LBCC's board page can be found here as a great example of board visibility: <https://www.linnbenton.edu/about/board/index.php>

Community college boards should not be directed to scrutinize association membership. This can be handled at the local level, and is already something our boards can do if they choose. There is no such legislation in existence or in process for universities, and this again places the community college sector at a disadvantage, when we are the ones serving Oregon's most diverse student body.

As must have been evident through yesterday's testimony, this legislation has had insufficient time to be strengthened through collaborative discussion and amendments. Though I understand that leadership values this bill as a high priority, there is no cause for such a rushed legislative process. I respectfully ask that you please respect the input of those who work closely to keep Oregon's 17 community colleges doing excellent work on behalf of thousands of students. Please do not hurry this incomplete bill across the finish line when it is not time-sensitive.

We appreciate and value your service to Oregon and to this committee. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Avery, Ph.D.  
President, Linn-Benton Community College