

Submitter: Melanie Landon-Hays  
On Behalf Of: Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers  
Committee: House Committee On Higher Education and Workforce  
Development  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3213

My name is Melanie Landon-Hays, and I am a faculty member at Western Oregon University. I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 3213, which will raise Oregon's open government and public records standards by ensuring that public university foundations are subject to the public records laws of this state. I am in support of this bill for the following reasons:

- 1) 92.5% of Oregon's approximately \$3.5 billion in university endowments are restricted by secret donor-imposed conditions, limiting how the funds can be used. A significant portion of these gifts are structured to prevent dollars from being spent on general expenses that could benefit the university, such as reducing tuition or ensuring fair wages for workers. In fact, as endowment funds grow, the percentage of money restricted from general use also increases. The terms governing these restrictions are outlined in gift agreements or memoranda of understanding between donors and university foundations. However, the public currently has no access to these agreements, leaving the specific conditions under which public university endowment funds can be spent entirely opaque and inaccessible.
- 2) At least 22 states, including Washington, California, Idaho, and Nevada, have already adopted laws ensuring public university foundation transparency. Oregon is falling behind on this issue. Public universities in states with strong transparency laws still attract major donations, demonstrating that open financial practices do not deter donations. If disclosure truly harmed philanthropy, we would expect to see a decline in these institutions' fundraising – but that hasn't happened.
- 3) Clear and accessible financial reporting can actually increase donor confidence by ensuring that funds are used appropriately. When organizations are more transparent, donors are more likely to contribute because they can see the impact of their contributions.
- 4) Transparency builds trust among students, faculty, donors, and the public, encouraging that university foundation funds are used ethically and equitably to support scholarship programs, campus initiatives, and student services.
- 5) Public oversight will help prevent undue influence from private donors or special interests, ensuring that philanthropic funds are used to support student success rather than private agendas.

Thank you for your time, and I hope that I can count on your support of HB 3213.  
Sincerely, Melanie