

# Southern OREGON UNIVERSITY

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

### TESTIMONY OFFERED IN SUPPORT OF SCR 10

**Offered by Daniel Santos, Trustee and former Board Chair**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

I come before you today with a heart both full of gratitude and heavy with loss, as I offer this testimony in support of SCR 10, and in honor and memory of a man who was a towering figure in Oregon's public life. On behalf of Southern Oregon University, as an alum, and as a Trustee, it is an honor to reflect on the remarkable legacy of former Senate President Peter Michael Coleman Courtney.

Senator Courtney was, in every sense, a servant leader. He dedicated decades of his life to the people of Oregon—first as a member of the Oregon House of Representatives, and later, for an unparalleled 19 years, as the President of the Oregon State Senate. His leadership was a testament to a rare combination of wisdom, humility, and fierce advocacy for what he believed was best for the people he served. Throughout his tenure, his work illuminated the path forward for countless Oregonians. His legacy is etched into the very fabric of this state—whether in the form of his commitment to mental health parity, supporting groundbreaking education policies, his tireless work on behalf of children and families, or his steadfast commitment to making Oregon a place of equity and opportunity for all.

I had the great privilege of knowing his character and his enduring love for Oregon. What set him apart was his unshakable belief in the power of community, the importance of listening to all voices, and his unwavering commitment to doing the right thing, even when it was difficult. His ability to bring people together—to find common ground where others saw only division was a gift. A gift that he used not for personal gain, but for the betterment of his fellow Oregonians.

Senator Courtney's impact on Southern Oregon University was profound, as it was throughout our state. In many ways, he embodied the spirit of the university itself—dedicated to the growth and success of our students, passionate about education, and deeply committed to building a brighter future for all. His leadership and support of higher education helped transform Southern Oregon University, providing our students with the tools, resources, and opportunities to thrive.

Beyond his policy achievements and his political acumen, Peter was, of course, a man of deep humanity. He was someone who truly cared about the people he served. His heart was as big as his intellect, and he never let the weight of his office cloud his compassion for those who were struggling. His kindness was matched only by his integrity.

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Senator Courtney's death leaves a profound hole in the fabric of Oregon, but his spirit, his dedication to the common good, and his love for his fellow Oregonians will continue to inspire us all. As we remember him today, let us honor his legacy not just in words, but in our actions. Let us work to continue the work he started—to build a more inclusive, just, and compassionate Oregon.

On behalf of Southern Oregon University and all who had the honor of working with Senator Courtney, I extend our deepest condolences to his family. We stand with you in mourning his passing, but also in celebrating the extraordinary life of a man who made our state a better place in countless ways.

It is especially fitting that you hold this hearing on St. Patrick's Day, which we know was special to the Senator. Peter Michael Coleman Courtney, your legacy will endure in the lives you touched, and in the work we continue to do.