



May 23, 2013

Senator Rod Monroe
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
900 Court Street NE S 409
Salem, OR 97301

Representative Betty Komp
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
900 Court Street NE H 273
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Monroe and Komp:

As the Presidents of Oregon's four major business associations we are writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 270 and House Bill 3120, which together streamline state-level oversight of post-secondary education and allow for local governing boards at large public universities.

The state's four major general membership business associations have joined together to raise awareness of the need for a strengthened post-secondary education system in Oregon. Associated Oregon Industries, the Oregon Business Association, the Oregon Business Council and the Portland Business Alliance have long paid close attention to education quality in Oregon, individually and collectively advocating for reform, investment and overall quality improvements. But the crisis facing our state, in terms of lagging job creation and declining per capita income, has made it clear that we face an unprecedented imperative: if we want to create long-term economic vitality in Oregon, we must improve the quality and output of our post secondary system.

We believe SB 270 and HB 3120 build on the work that the 2011 Legislature began with the passage of three key bills:

- SB 242, which freed the university system of administrative and financial restrictions placed on state agencies;
- SB 1581, which created the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) to coordinate the work of colleges and universities; and,
- SB 909, which created the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) to forge P-20 connections and recommend P-20 investment strategies.

SB 270 represents the culmination of your Joint Special Committee on Institutional Boards, as well as the work of each of our universities and the Oregon University System to ensure that our large public universities gain increased autonomy. This work also ensures that our regional universities can continue to contribute to the educational, economic and cultural richness of our state.

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HB 3120 originally built on the work of the Joint Special Committee, the OEIB Governance and Policy Sub-Committee and the Oregon Business Plan to create a Department of Post-Secondary Education. While we recognize the creation of an additional state agency was not a step the Legislature could take this session, we believe the newly refined and reduced scope of this bill will provide clarity in the mission of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and will provide integrated leadership, regulation, and support for community colleges, universities, private career schools, and financial aid programs.

These bills would not have reached your committee were it not for the leadership and policy expertise of Senator Hass and Representatives Dembrow and Johnson. As the Committee leadership dealing with these issues, these legislators have worked to include diverse stakeholder opinions and craft legislation that is responsive to the needs of Oregon's post secondary system.

We believe that it is only through a united approach that we can collectively position Oregon's post-secondary system to deliver high quality education and training. This training must be responsive to the demands of tomorrow's workforce, reflective of the funding needs and local relationships of each institution, and able to achieve the state's standards for higher education.

We urge you to work with your colleagues to ensure the success of these bills by crafting the budgets for the Oregon University System, Department of Community College and Workforce Development, and Oregon Student Access Commission in a manner that supports the policy objectives of SB 270 and HB 3120. While we enthusiastically support the policy included in these bills, we are also keenly aware that this endeavor will only be successful to the extent that you can build a budget that supports the HECC in its new and increasingly important mission.

Thank you for your consideration of these two bills. We urge your continued support in ensuring that Oregon's Post-Secondary system is equipped to meet the challenge of reaching the state's 40/40/20 goal.

Sincerely,



Jay Clemens
President & CEO, AOI



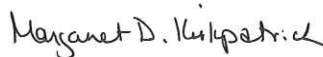
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Duncan Wyse
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CC:

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Representative Michael Dembrow

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