

**SB 270**  
**Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee**  
**February 28, 2012**

**Statement of AFT-Oregon**

The American Federation of Teachers-Oregon represents 15,000 members across the state. Our members live in every legislative district in Oregon and work in the private and public sectors in elementary and high schools, child care centers, community colleges and four-year colleges and institutions, to health care clinics and hospitals. AFT members work as classified employees, faculty, instructors, graduate teachers, early educators and in health care professions. AFT-Oregon represents members at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, Western Oregon University, and Eastern Oregon University. Nationally, of AFT's 1.5 million members, nearly 200,000 are higher education faculty, professional staff and graduate employees—more than any other national organization.

AFT-Oregon is proud to be engaged in the conversations around higher education accountability and innovation. In 2010, we drafted principles for Higher Education Restructuring in Oregon. Chief among these principles was to “sustain the Oregon University System as an integrated entity maintaining its blend of research and regional campuses to support students in rural and urban environments...Any restructure should apply to the system as a whole.” It is important that the Special Committee on University Governance keep in mind that we should not be concerned with just one single campus, but the system of higher education as a whole. At a time that we are seeking to reduce silos in the P-20 system and to increase coordination between universities, community colleges, and high schools we need to look at ways to strengthen connections between all education institutions.

It is important that the state accept its role and responsibility to the system of public higher education. Our universities have been severely underfunded for the last decade. The discussion of institutional boards as a remedy for this underfunding is short sided. Solving the higher education funding crisis should not be confused with the functions of a university governing board.

In order for University Governance Boards to work we must ensure adequate faculty representation on the board. Using the State Board of Higher Education as a model, if institutional boards are put in place we must make sure that they include representatives from the faculty, staff and students of the institution. It is vital that the voices of those on the frontlines of education, faculty in the classrooms, are brought to the table to share their unique insights.

We ask that as the committee moves forward, the discussion and collaboration with interested parties continues. We must ensure a university governance system that works for students, faculty, university staff and the public.