

To: House Higher Education, Innovation and Workforce Development Committee

Chair Tobias Read, Vice Chair Joe Gallegos and members of the Committee – my name is John Ahlen, I'm a classified employee at the University of Oregon and chief steward for our local union – SEIU. Administrative bloat is a way of life at my institution. I am writing today to support HB 3049 a bill that would set Staff Ratio Goals of 7 front line workers to 1 supervisory employee throughout the seven universities in Oregon.

Example one: As a steward, we have cases go through three steps of hearings before going to arbitration, intended to allow us to settle differences at the lowest possible level before attorneys get involved. In practice, administrative bloat has completely overrun the intent of this process. In a recent case at UO, during the first step it was reviewed by Wes Fowler, an attorney who serves as the director of labor relations for UO. Since we weren't able to come to an agreement, we moved the case to the second step, where it was reviewed by Bill Brady, an attorney who serves as the director of the directors of labor relations at UO. We later moved the case to the third step, which involved forwarding the case to Brian Caufield, the director of the directors of the directors of labor relations for the USSE. They even hired another attorney at UO whose sole job, I was told by management, was to do the scheduling, photocopying and scanning for another attorney working in our HR department. Even with this army of lawyers, even simple legal questions often get contracted out to outside firms, wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money.

Example two: UO just spent an extra three million dollars per year on an executive level position, making our football coach the highest paid public employee in the state of Oregon. UO has millions of dollars available to spend, and instead of hiring more workers, routinely gives administrators large raises with no ceiling. Workers are seen as an expendable and infinitely renewable resource, and we are regularly overworked to fund the raises of our supervisors.

Example three: UO is willing to hire hundreds of administrators who don't supervise anyone and have no or very little managerial authority. Out of the roughly 5,000 employees at UO, the administration likes to try to point out that less than 1% of that number are actual administrators. However, UO designates well over a thousand employees as "officers of administration", the exact same designation given to vice presidents and provosts. The administration likes to keep these distinctions vague and confusing because they can arbitrarily choose at any point in time which "officers of administration" are actually "administrators". The UO should be required to create separate designations for true administrators.

Legislation such as HB 3049 is our only opportunity to require a change, because the UO administration otherwise has demonstrated no interest in making the change themselves. Thank you for listening.