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To: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

From: Brent Finkbeiner

RE: HB 2666

My name is Brent Finkbeiner and I thank you for allowing me to speak before you. I'd like to briefly touch on my experience at Clackamas Community College, where I graduated with my ASOT Business. I also served in the Associated Student Government for two years, one as a Senator and one as President. My experience within ASG was incredible, I was able to connect with students, faculty, staff, administration, and legislators such as yourselves. This has proven to me that student power is real, and it is lasting. I've been seeing familiar faces advocating and training students to be independent and strong leaders for years. So when I heard about Student Fee Autonomy for Community Colleges, I strongly supported the idea.

While it is important to remember that each community college has a different structure, that's no reason to withhold fee autonomy entirely from community college students. Last year I was board chair for the Oregon Community College Student Association and I had the privilege of working with student representatives from 9 different community college campuses. I believe the student body at a number of our institutions are ready to handle the responsibility of fee autonomy. It would engage students at large in the decision-making process for how their money is spent. In turn, this helps students prepare for the democratic process later in life. Students would have the power to decide what educational activities to invest in. It would give community colleges an opportunity to add jobs for students at the discretion of the student body, and not solely by the administration. Some examples of what students could do include expanding clubs and resource centers.

At Clackamas CC, a brand new multicultural center for students was opened a few years ago, however it's been difficult to staff. If I would have been able to present the necessity of such a resource to my constituents, then we would have had the power to determine how it gets funded and what we would get out of it. Participating in statewide work is also difficult. In OCCSA last year, while we did have help, our group was run entirely by students, no paid organizer, this is happening with this year's board as well. Community college students need to have the option of informing the student body of the state level services available and let them decide on whether it's worth funding, just like universities do already. That's what HB2666 is about, choice, democracy, and student power.