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Student Body President of the University of Oregon

House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee:

First and foremost, thank you so much for inviting me to come testify in front of you all. I apologize that I cannot be there in person and I so appreciate your flexibility and desire to listen to student's experiences.

The creation of the Board of Trustees allows the University to have more control over specific line items in the budget which would hopefully equate to saving students money. Unfortunately, all public sectors in Oregon are really struggling right now so we have yet to see this pay off.

If we want the University to become more academically rigorous and competitive we have to keep supporting the independent governing board and working with the strategic plans set out by President Schill and the UO Board of Trustees. This will have benefits in the future for students as they will see the value of their degree increase. This is really hard for students to recognize though. Especially when they are being asked to pay more and more money each year. Student will always inherently be worried about the economic short run and the BOT will always be worried about long run which makes it seem like we are always at odds. This is not necessarily my opinion. Because of my direct interactions with the board, I can see both sides of the story but I completely sympathize with the students that feel this way.

I believe that many students at the University of Oregon have a perception of the BOT that is an elitist group that does not always have students best interest at heart. I think that really comes from the short run/ long run rift. The Board needs to do better in explaining how their decisions will impact students and improve their lives in the future, and students need to do a better job of understanding what the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the board truly are.

The communication from the board to students could definitely could be improved. It is being continuously worked on and since the board is new I think they are still figuring out how best create open communication channels with students. In my experience, I have observed the trustees being very willing and able to talk with students so I hope to see that relationship grow and improve over the next few years.