



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

February 6, 2018

Chair Jeff Reardon; Vice Chairs Teresa Alonso Leon and Gene Whisnant
Members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 4141

Dear Chair Reardon and members of the Committee,

My name is Ramin Farahmandpur. I am a professor in the Graduate School of Education at Portland State University, where I've taught for 15 years. I serve as the chair of the Legislative Committee of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) chapter at Portland State University. I am also the Vice President for Political Action for AAUP-Oregon. Thank you for your service to our state and for the opportunity to testify today.

On behalf of 3400 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, and our faculty chapters at the University of Oregon and Portland State University, I am here to ask that you please support HB 4141.

College accessibility and affordability remains a top priority for Oregon college students and faculty members. A recent 2017 Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) study concluded that 95 percent of 2000 colleges across the nation remain unaffordable for most low-income and first-generation college students, including students of color.

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) reports that over a span of two decades, Oregon's public university appropriation fund has plunged from \$877 million to \$778 million. During the same period, enrollment increased from 97,000 to 116,000 students.

According to a 2015 HECC university evaluation report, cuts to higher education funding have resulted in Portland State University resident undergraduate tuition and fees increases of as much as 63.8 percent in the last 10 years. University of Oregon students, too, have been impacted by this funding crisis.

Similarly, the 2016 HECC report concluded that "resident undergraduate tuition and fees at the University of Oregon increased 80.3 percent in the last 10 years, including increases of 3.7 percent and 4.6 percent in 2015-16 and 2016-17 respectively."

Although Governor Kate Brown boosted higher education funding by \$70 million for the 2017-19 biennium, universities nevertheless increased tuition with nominal input from students and

faculty members. The PSU Board of Trustees, for example, voted to approve a 5.45 percent increase in tuition. University of Oregon's Board of Trustees also increased in-state tuition by 6.6 percent for the 2017-18 school year. This tuition increase means that full-time PSU undergraduate students must pay an additional \$383 in tuition and fees for each academic year. For UO full-time undergraduate students, a 6.6 percent increase translated into an additional \$810 in tuition and fees, according to the *Eugene Register-Guard*.

HB 4141 directs each university governing board to create a Tuition Advisory Council whose purpose would be to "make recommendations regarding tuition and mandatory enrollment fees." The bill allows historically underserved students, university faculty members, and student government to have more oversight and input in the decisions that the university of board of trustees make with respect to tuition and fees. In effect, HB 4141 makes university governing boards more accountable to students and faculty.

By creating Tuition Advisory Councils, HB 4141 establishes structures and processes to ensure the viability of college accessibility and affordability. Doing so is key to fulfilling the state's higher education mission.

Sincerely,

Ramin Farahmandpur, Ph.D.
Chair, Legislative Committee, PSU-AAUP
Vice President for Political Action, AAUP-Oregon