

TO: House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee

FROM: John Pascale

SUBJECT: HB 4141

DATE: February 6th, 2018

Chair Reardon and Members of the Committee:

Hello, Chair Reardon, Vice-chairs Alonso-Leon and Whisnant and my name is John Pascale, and I'm a senior at Southern Oregon University studying political science in the hopes of finding employment with a government office where I can aid a lawmaker or two in the crafting of policy that I believe is important. Three years ago, I could have never imagined that I'd be attending this university. I lacked all motivation or reason to continue past the community college education I received 9 years ago. Eventually, and possibly by accident, I found a motivation for myself to get more education.

In 2016 I got involved in advocacy and governance at the University and became interested in community justice and advocacy. The year in which I decided to go back was critical in determining my future career path. Now I'm trying to give back to my peers at SOU by raising awareness of issues that have the greatest impact on them as students. Working on bettering the future outlook by tackling environment justice and advocating for my community. Today I'm here to talk about the tuition hikes I and many other students have faced at Southern Oregon University.

I was on last year's Tuition Advisory Council (TAC) which gave input on the proposed tuition increases for the 2017-2019 biennium. One of my main issues with our duties was that there was absolutely no process in place to reach out to SOU students and take their concerns into account regarding such issues as food, housing, and what exactly the rate increase was going to be. What I mean is that the TAC functioned more as an approval process for something that had already been decided behind closed doors. The pro-forma was based on conservative projections being presented to us as the likely outcome making no mention of that fact that SOU could have functioned at a 7.37% increase at the Governor's Recommended Budget, according section C of the HECC Tuition Materials on SOU's proposed increase.

That lack of input also translated to the conduct of our duties. While certainly provided with information about SOU's finances, we were only presented with half of the picture and led to believe our 12% was necessary to keep a flat budget. However, a critical part relating to maintaining the reserve fund at a certain size was left out. The manner in which the issue had been presented to us left no room for other options, so we approved the increase.

In short, we need a standardized procedure that makes large tuition hikes like those at Southern Oregon University and other Oregon universities experienced last year subject to stronger proof of outreach. All we're asking for is transparency so that the body which has accountability body charged with reviewing these hikes can make an informed decision. Please vote for HB4141 and help students have a true voice in the tuition setting process!

Sincerely, John Pascale

Southern Oregon University