



March 10, 2021

Dear Chair Riley and members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business:

As the lead research officers at Oregon's public research universities, we are writing to urge your support for the -1 amendment to SB 112.

The last year has taught us many lessons, among them is the valuable role public research universities play in our society. Many in our state worked to respond to and mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and faculty at our universities were no exception. We engaged in efforts to understand the impact of remote learning on K-12 students on the autism spectrum, worked to help understand and mitigate for how COVID-19 traveled through indoor spaces and heating, air conditioning, and ventilation systems, helped address the state's testing needs, and, most recently, used genomic sequencing expertise to analyze samples and determine if new COVID-19 variants were showing up in Oregon communities.

One of the major financial engines that propels this research activity is federal research grants. We urge your support for the -1 amendment to ensure universities can continue to secure this type of grant-funded research activity and it can continue to grow in Oregon.

As you have heard, this policy provides the committee the rare opportunity to help universities reduce long-term costs without negatively impacting employees or benefits. By shifting the default retirement selection for unclassified faculty and staff, universities will realize modest cost savings over time.

Additionally, this change would make Oregon faculty more competitive as they work to secure federal research grants. If the default presumption is changed, universities expect the blended OPE (Other Personnel Expenses) rate that we must report to federal agencies in grant applications to be reduced.

By increasing the proportion of federal grants that go directly to research and not absorbed in personnel costs, Oregon faculty will score higher on applications and be better positioned to bring outside resources into the state, furthering academic inquiry and our ability to serve our communities.

From the discovery of penicillin decades ago, to Portland State University's recent work on malaria treatments, university research, facilitated through federal funding, can truly change the world.

We urge the committee to support the -1 amendment to enable more of this activity and discovery to occur here in Oregon.

Sincerely,

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