

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Brent Wilder, President
Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities
DATE: March 15, 2021
RE: Concerns with SB 712

The Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities is the voice of Oregon's independent, non-profit higher education sector, actively supporting the success of our member colleges and universities, their students, and alumni. It has been our pleasure to work with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, agency, and staff over the years.

We have regularly reported to the HECC during its meetings and have worked directly with Commissioners and staff to resolve issues such as student complaint process, Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG) structure, public school program expansion needs, transfer policies, applied baccalaureate rulemaking, and much more. We have found the questions, input, and attention from all Commissioners both at the full body and in subcommittee to be equally weighted, and the policymaking done by the Commission equally impacted by all, regardless of voting status.

SB 712 changes the makeup of the Commission and the voting status of members, which at its face seems fair and inclusive – but in fact, it is not. Allowing stakeholders from one group to have a vote when other stakeholder groups are not included is the exact opposite. A Commissioner representing a particular interest group adds value to the conversation, but actual voting should only be done by those with all Oregon students in mind, not a subset.

The HECC was established in ORS 350 with legislative findings that included: *Oregon needs able and imaginative men and women for the direction and operation of all its institutions. An interest in all its institution is the key - public, private, urban, rural, large, and small. Not a particular college or university, not a particular group within the institution be it student group or employee set. The HECC was formed with members from each congressional district and four from general public to be the oversight for the good of the whole and who were required to be "well informed on the principles of higher education."*

Students, faculty members and representatives of institutions and constituency bases were also seated, but not as voters who are obligated to a larger audience. This was not only wise, but also the precedent in other states.

According to the [Education Commission of the States](#), twenty-eight states have a single, statewide coordinating board/agency or governing board. The majority of board members for systemwide boards are appointed by governors and, in most states, individuals serve as ex-officio board members when based on their professional roles.

Finally, as we mentioned above, one stakeholder interest group should not have a vote when others do not. You will note that there is neither a current role on the Commission for a representative from the private, non-profit sector, nor does SB 712 add one. All interest groups cannot possibly be represented on a Commission without it becoming unwieldy. Oregon's private, non-profit colleges and universities, staff, and students understand this and rely on the current voting Commissioners to work toward the good of the *entire* Higher Education system.