



Emily Wanous

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Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education committee,

For the record, my name is Emily Wanous and I am the Legislative Director for the Oregon Student Association. **I am here today in support of SB712**, which would extend voting rights to all positions within the HECC by redesignating the five current nonvoting student, staff, and faculty positions. In addition, this bill would add a position for a graduate student attending a public university.

The HECC was established in order to make critical decisions within Oregon's postsecondary education system and to represent the diverse stakeholder groups included. Considering students, faculty and staff make up a majority of most-impacted populations within higher education, we must ensure their voices are not only heard, but included in the established voting process.

Extending voting rights to students, faculty and staff is an important step in normalizing what it means to have an equitable representation structure that allows for the impacted stakeholders to give meaningful input. The passage of SB712 would solidify the HECC's commitment to intentional participation from student, staff, and faculty voices who make up our diverse campus communities.

The argument that students cannot comprehend the complex and in depth processes within budget and policy is one that is outdated and does not honor the power within the lived experiences of our communities. The conversation around whether students should be included in student-centered decision-making bodies is far too common. When such conversations continue to arise, students are left wondering if they belong in these spaces to begin with. This form of gatekeeping can inadvertently deter true input from the communities most impacted.

Folks are discussing a potential amendment to include two voting positions for one community college and one university president to the board. OSA opposes any such amendment due to the layered power dynamics and a deep concern with accurate representation of impacted populations. In 2019, there were over 110,000 community college students and upwards of 100,000 university students who collectively received one nonvoting position each to advocate on behalf of all students in the State. Institution's presidents, tasked with fiercely advocating for their institution and getting paid very well for it, have a different stake and positioning than other campus populations. For example, when the university boards were created, Presidents were non voting members recognizing the inherent conflict of interests as it relates to discussions around salaries, benefits, and more. Similarly, the HECC votes and gives inputs on school-specific program approvals and other items that could overlap with the President's stake in their said university. Also, university presidents strongly advocate and suggest board appointments to the Governor's office, which students, staff and faculty are not as positioned to do so. OSA believes by extending positions to Presidents would interfere with such dynamics.

With all that being said, Thank you for your time and consideration and I welcome any questions.