

February 12, 2021



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ASWOU PRESIDENT

Werner University Center #122 | 345 Monmouth Ave. N. | Monmouth, OR 97361

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Thomsen and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is N.J. Johnson and I am serving as the student body president of Western Oregon University for the 2020-21 academic year. I am writing to advocate for the importance of a "Yes" vote on HB 3012 which would limit the ability of public universities to refuse new mandatory incidental fees or process for collecting mandatory incidental fees.

The student incidental fee is the most reliable mechanism for supporting student advocacy, activities, and support at institutions of higher education in Oregon. At Western Oregon, the incidental fee supports athletics, the food pantry, student government, clubs, creative arts, student media, childcare, and many other resources that contribute to the student experience. These organizations provide essential services, student employment, and opportunities for students to engage with their campus community in ways that provide a sense of home and retain students.

Along with the resources the incidental fee supports, it is also known to be the only fee at Oregon campuses where students play the primary role in determining and allocating fees. In order to protect this, ORS 352.105 is in need of amendment.

The amendments listed in HB 3012 would clarify the roles of the student government, administration, and board as recent events have highlighted the need for distinction in how every involved party is to carry out their statutory responsibilities. At my own institution, the WOU Administration has twice rejected the student government's fee request. As we did our due diligence to follow the statute, we found that there were several unclear or underdeveloped aspects which seemed to be impeding our ability to adhere to our process while working with administrators and several aspects of the statute allowed administrators to stall our process simply through non-collaboration. Agreements to support incidental fee-funded areas were only made following an appeal with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. HB 3012 would affirm the role of the recognized student government in evaluating the impact student fee decisions would have on students and the campus. The statute relating to the student incidental fee must reflect the spirit of student autonomy in order to protect the process and resources the incidental fee supports.

As someone who has regularly and closely reviewed this statute as far back as the summer, I strongly urge a yes vote on HB 3012. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

N.J. Johnson
ASWOU President

aswoupresident@mail.wou.edu
(503) 838 - 8555