

I am a professor of civil engineering at Oregon Institute of Technology and want to register my support for SB 854. The proposals in this bill are timely, important, and directly address issues that have evolved since the dissolution of the Oregon University System and creation of independent governing boards at the state's public universities. In particular, there are issues of transparency and representation that this bill addresses by (1) increasing representation of students, faculty, and staff on university boards, president search committees, and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission; (2) making board member email addresses publicly available; (3) ensuring regular biennial reviews of university presidents by a broad constituency; and (4) ensuring that a board secretary may not also be employed in the administration of a public university.

Recent events at Oregon Tech have made it clear that increased transparency and broader representation on the board will ensure that key constituencies, particularly students, faculty, and staff, have not only the invitation to communicate freely to board members, but to have greater voting power on the board itself. Perhaps most importantly for us, this bill would disallow the joint appointment of a board secretary as a member of the administration. When such a joint appointment exists, it creates an unethical situation in which the person charged with conducting and recording the affairs of the board also directly reports to the president of the university. Thank you to the sponsors of this bill for thoughtfully addressing these issues. I support this bill.