

Hello to the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Nick Keough and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Oregon, as well as a member of ASUO Student Government!

Today, I am asking you to vote yes on SB 854 which will bring more transparency and accountability to the Board of Trustees at each public university. Specifically, the bill will require board members to have publicly-available official email addresses, requires boards to give time for faculty, staff and students to comment on any issue before the board, and prohibits a board secretary from being a member of the university administration.

The bill does other things as well, but these are the things that I am most excited about because I have seen why these things are issues on the UO campus. For instance, the accessibility of public comment with the UO BOT is abysmal. The Board almost never has a live meeting where students, faculty, staff, and community members can come and make comments on the public record directly to the board. Instead, they have us email them testimony prior to the meeting. We just sent it to a general BOT email and there is never a guarantee that our concerns are actually heard by the Board of Trustees. We don't even get a confirmation or response that our concerns were received. This is unacceptable because I pay way too much to not be able to have a say in my university. The same is true for every other student that goes here, everyone that is hired by this institution, and everyone in the Eugene/Springfield community who is impacted by the decisions of the UO and the BOT.

On this same note of getting into contact and bringing concerns to the Board, I am also glad this bill will require that board members will have publicly-available email addresses. This will be important because in my experience, it's been very difficult to get a hold of board members. Especially ones that don't live in the state or who don't come to campus often.

Finally, I will say that I am very supportive of the board secretary being separate from Admin. In the past, I have seen instances where the Board secretary has withheld information to protect the board or gate keep people from board members, so this will be a good development to bring more accountability there.

To close, I want to thank the legislators here for having a hearing on this bill and being open to make some common-sense reforms to the BOT that will make it more accountable and transparent. That said, I think we should really look at this as a first step. This bill is important in the meantime but there is so much more that we need to do to make sure that our universities are working for students, faculty, staff, and the communities, and aren't just unchecked unaccountable Boards that are disconnected from the needs of campus and the state. Thank you and I hope you will support SB 845!

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Nick Keough (They/He)

Community Organizer

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