

June 3, 2021

RE: Support for SB 854

To Whom it May Concern,

I am an Oregon resident and I have worked for the Oregon University System (OUS) for more than 20 years. I am currently a Professor of Mathematics at the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) and I am writing this letter in support of bill SB 854.

After the OUS disbanded the board of higher education, each campus worked to create their own individual governing board of trustees. I strongly believe that SB 854, if enacted, will help to remove certain conflicts of interest that have occurred between university governing boards and university academic leadership. I also strongly believe that SB 854 will help to ensure that the membership of the board of trustees better reflects the broad-representation of the university.

An example of how a conflict of interest can arise is when a board of trustees is allowed to have a secretary that also is employed as an academic administrator. At the Oregon Institute of Technology, the board of trustees secretary also serves as the OIT president's personal advisor. To see one example of many as to why this is a conflict of interest, consider the process of when a student or employee wishes to submit a complaint about the school administration to the board of trustees. In our situation, such a letter of complaint is required to be sent to the board secretary (whom is also the senior advisor to the president).

The state bill SB 854, if enacted, will require an increase to the number of university students, faculty and staff that will serve on the board of trustees. In my opinion, this increase of representation will improve the board of trustees by ensuring that the decisions made better reflect the needs of the university as a whole.

While a university governing board should work to support the university needs, including the support of academic administration, the board should also be separate from the administration in order to perform any necessary over-sight functions. I strongly believe that SB 854 will help to reduce both the appearance as well as the actual conflicts of interest that currently occur as well as increase the quality of the board itself by having a better and more complete representation of the university.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter of support for SB 854.

Respectfully,

Jim Fischer

Klamath Falls, OR