

To the House Committee on Commerce & Consumer Protection:

I am writing on behalf of AFT-Oregon. We are a labor federation representing workplace unions across the state in early learning, K-12 schools, and across our state's college and university landscape. Our 28 unions represent over 18,000 essential staff, instructors, faculty, and employees who support our students and advocate for the public good. **AFT-Oregon's leadership encourages the legislature to meaningfully consider the importance of robust public funding, meaningful accountability, and a reigning in of administrative bloat is essential to consider.**

We are sure that this study will present a positive opportunity for lawmakers, leaders, and constituents to reflect on the ups and downs of the current public university system. There were pros and cons of the Oregon University System (OUS) and the now-shuttered Department of Higher Education. There are pros and cons of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC). We are confident that there can be a balance between rigid control and too-permissive coordination.

More than anything, we wish to stress how chronic underfunding from the State of Oregon is a principal dilemma. This is combined with salaries exceeding a half-billion-dollars a year for some University Presidents and other egregious salaries and spending priorities which have dramatically escalated the past decade within the private-board model.

There are certainly ways that we see upper administrative positions and services could be more shared, centralized, and efficient. But when it comes to the faculty preparing curriculum, the advisors shepherding first-generation students, the custodians ensuring clean and safe learning environments, *there is no spending left to trim*. Funding and new revenue has *got* to be a central topic for lawmakers. There is a real demographic cliff facing institutions – raising tuition or eliminating programs hardly feel like solutions that would broaden enrollment.

Public universities should complement, not compete, against each other. We hope that the thousands of union members across all public universities represented by AFT-Oregon local unions, alongside our classified staff peers, are brought to the table to address the challenges facing ahead. The universities would not operate without them. Their expertise and opinions are invaluable.

On behalf of AFT-Oregon's President and Executive Council, we look forward to next steps together.

Sincerely,



Harper Haverkamp, PhD
American Federation of Teachers – Oregon (AFT-Oregon)