February 5, 2026

House Committee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: Testimony on HB 4124

The Portland State University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (PSU-AAUP) is the collective bargaining representative for more than 1,200 instructional faculty, research faculty, academic professionals, and academic librarians at Portland State University. As a chapter of the AAUP, we are part of a long tradition of defending academic freedom, faculty governance, and the professional standards that underpin high-quality public higher education.

The PSU‑AAUP Executive Council does not support HB 4124 in its current form.

PSU-AAUP appreciates the Legislature's attention to the long-term viability of Oregon's post-secondary education system and shares the goal of a more accessible, effective, and financially sustainable system. We agree that a decade into the current governance structure, a thoughtful assessment of the system's performance and future needs is warranted.

At the same time, HB 4124 raises serious concerns about process, scope, and implementation that must be addressed if the resulting study and recommendations are to be legitimate, constructive, and workable. HECC's prior restructuring and "efficiency" initiatives have too often proceeded with minimal, late, or purely formal consultation with faculty, campus stakeholders, and the unions that represent them, leaving those most affected with little meaningful voice. Unless explicitly corrected in statute and practice, this pattern could be repeated under the ambitious charge and tight timeline set out in HB 4124.

First, any study of restructuring, collaboration, or integration must be explicitly linked to a commitment to adequate and sustainable public funding for higher education. Restructuring without investment is unlikely to solve problems of access, affordability, and institutional stability and risks masking a funding crisis as a governance problem. No set of recommendations emerging from this process should be adopted without concurrently addressing chronic underfunding of Oregon's public colleges and universities and the compensation, workload, and staffing conditions that directly affect student learning.

Second, faculty at each institution must retain a predominant role in decisions about academic programming and curricular change, and any study or restructuring recommendations must

explicitly respect this core area of faculty prerogative. AAUP's historic work on shared governance and academic freedom is grounded in the principle that sound academic decisions require the independent professional judgment of the faculty, free from political or economic interference. System-level recommendations must not displace faculty governance over curriculum and program development within institutions or weaken contractual protections for academic freedom, due process, and workload negotiated through collective bargaining.

Third, HB 4124's timeline—requiring a comprehensive study and detailed recommendations by December 1, 2026—poses serious challenges to genuine collaboration. A study of this breadth cannot rely on a small number of convenings or consultant-driven exercises if it is to meet the bill's mandate for consultation with institutions, faculty, staff, students, unions, and other stakeholders. The Legislature should insist on clear expectations for the depth and timing of stakeholder engagement, including opportunities for iterative feedback from campus communities and their representative bodies.

PSU-AAUP stands ready to participate constructively in this process and to bring the perspective of faculty and academic professionals at Oregon's largest public university. Any study conducted under HB 4124 should build on, not bypass, the expertise and democratic structures that faculty and academic unions have developed to protect academic freedom, shared governance, and the quality of education our students receive.

Respectfully submitted,

David Kinsella
Vice President for Collective Bargaining
PSU-AAUP