



American Association of University Professors

Academic Freedom for a Free Society

Senate Education Committee
Senate Bill 81
February 24, 2015
Testimony of Dr. José Padín, President

Chair Roblan and members of the Senate Committee on Education, my name is Dr. José Padín. I am the elected President of the Oregon Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). My work as elected President of the Oregon AAUP is volunteer service on behalf of our students and our universities. I am an Associate Professor of Sociology at Portland State University, and have been an educator in Oregon for 19 years.

On behalf of the Oregon Conference of the American Association of University Professors, our collective bargaining faculty chapters at University of Oregon and Portland State University, and our faculty members across Oregon, I am here to express our concerns about SB 81.

While we believe that universal, free education is a public good and an aspiration to strive for, we believe that SB 81, attempting to move in that direction, has serious flaws and unintended consequences.

Our first concern is that SB 81 is an unfunded mandate. If passed, SB 81 would waive tuition for any community college student who has been a state resident for a year and accepted all financial aid available to them and pays \$50 per course. Where does the money come from? Without a clear source of new funding, SB 81 would come at the expense of existing programs at community colleges, colleges, and universities, or the cost of SB 81 would be passed on to other Oregon students, or both.

The second flaw in SB 81 is that it is discriminatory. In Oregon we have built a public higher education infrastructure over many decades, and community colleges are a vital part of that infrastructure, but we also have undergraduate programs of state, regional, and national reputation at our four-year institutions. SB 81 disadvantages those students for whom the programs at our four-year universities might be the best option. If the concept behind SB 81 were fully funded, shouldn't it be non-discriminatory? Shouldn't we allow our students to use their two years of free tuition at any public institution?

Thirdly, SB 81 would have the unintended consequence of siphoning students from the university system into the community colleges and depressing enrollment in our universities. If many students choose to spend their first 2 years at community colleges, universities will be forced to shift costs to the final two years of the bachelor's degree, with fewer students completing their degrees, and forced to chase out-of-state students, crowding out Oregonians. At a time when the state is attempting to move towards the 40-40-20 goals, SB 81 undermines progress. Again, if the concept were funded, why not two years free at any public institution?

We believe that any proposal in this direction would need to provide that funds would be usable at any public Oregon post-secondary institution and would need to be fully funded. Thank you.

For further information, contact:

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