



NEWS

Oregon Legislature - House Democratic Caucus

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House Passes Oregon University System Restructuring Bill

SB 242 will increase autonomy, accountability and efficiency of OUS

SALEM – The Oregon House today passed Senate Bill 242, which restructures the Oregon University System, by a 55-5 vote. The bill redefines OUS, previously a state agency, as a Public University System – allowing OUS to manage its own resources. SB 242 was conceived by a bipartisan workgroup that met to examine best practices for improving the quality, efficiency, and affordability of Oregon’s seven-university system.

“Coming into this session with a split chamber, big ideas and big changes seemed to be off the table, but this bill proves that sentiment wrong” said Representative Tobias Read (D-Beaverton), who led the workgroup that developed SB242. “This bill dramatically restructures the Oregon University System to give it the autonomy and flexibility necessary to improve while preserving important accountability measures.”

SB 242 alters some requirements that have proven to be a burden for OUS. Among the bill’s provisions, SB 242 shifts responsibility for liability, defense and indemnity to OUS and the State Board of Higher Education. It eliminates the requirement that OUS seek permission to exceed its expenditure limitation to spend other available moneys, including tuition and fees collected. And it authorizes the OUS board to purchase property and construct facilities without seeking legislative approval if the purchase or construction is to be completed without appropriating General Fund moneys or using general obligation bonds.

“Coming out of the world of the community colleges, I was astonished to realize the statutory restrictions and bureaucratic hurdles that are in place for our universities,” said Representative Michael Dembrow (D-Portland), who carried the bill on the floor. “In passing SB 242 today, the capstone of our higher education reform work this session, we are freeing our universities to do what great universities do, to be what great universities are. We are creating a better path for young Oregonians.”

SB 242 now moves back to the Senate for possible concurrence.

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