



To: University of Oregon Administrators:

Provost Chris Long — provost@uoregon.edu

Greg Jones, Associate Vice President, Principal Giving — gjones@uoregon.edu

Allison Blade, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President — ablade@uoregon.edu

Dean Carol Stabile — cstabile@uoregon.edu

Kirstin Strickland, Director of Alumni Engagement — kirstin@oregon.edu

RE: The Oregon Forensics Program

October 10, 2025

Dear Provost Long, Associate Vice President Jones, Associate Vice President Blade, Dean Stabile, and Director Strickland,

I write today in strong support of the University of Oregon Forensics program. As a former teacher and speech and debate coach of 42 years, I urge the University of Oregon to maintain one of our state's strongest and most influential speech and debate organizations. This program is rooted in a rich history and deep community network, with the first iteration dating back to the University's founding. Students came together to test one another's argumentative skills, explore new ideas, and strengthen their public speaking. These founding principles of critical thinking and problem-solving remain at the core of the modern speech and debate program. In a rapidly evolving digital information landscape, the importance of developing young adults' analytical reasoning and logical inquiry skills has never been more critical.

I was a member of Canby High School's first speech and debate team as a fourteen-year-old. That was the beginning of a lifelong commitment to creating debate opportunities for Oregon students. Over four decades, I debated and coached students on local, regional, and national levels. The annual tournament at the University of Oregon is the most impactful high school speech and debate event of the year. Oregon high schools of all sizes attend this tournament, allowing participants to form connections with peers from across the state and challenging students to perform at their highest level. As the host, the University provides young adults with an opportunity to consider future pathways in higher education and elite debate. It truly is the best **recruitment tool** you have. These tournaments can be transformative for students.

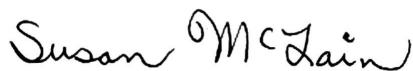
Speech and debate laid the foundation for my work as an educator and policy maker. My experiences as a debater and coach included regular creative thinking, rigorous analysis, and civil discourse, all essential components of effective deliberation and governance. As a member of the Oregon House of Representatives, I engage with speech and debate alumni who have grown into trusted community leaders and policy experts. Many of these colleagues and partners found their way into public service through speech and debate and credit their debate background for instilling the necessary skills to succeed in their careers. From engineers to healthcare workers, I hear from business and community leaders that educated dialogue and discourse are essential for success in all walks of life.

In order for this program to thrive, the University must commit to sustaining a robust program with staff support. Without funding, stability, and institutional knowledge, student-run organizations cannot operate at the same capacity as established, supported University programs. This transition will disrupt the competitiveness and strength of University of Oregon Forensics. It would be devastating to current students and jeopardize the University's ability to enroll future classes of talented debaters and critical thinkers. My daughter, Emily McLain, a former Associated Student Body President of the University of Oregon, participated in the renowned speech and debate program. Eliminating this powerful recruitment tool risks losses to student leadership and the broader University community.

The power of speech and debate to uplift young adults and shape the most essential skills of democratic citizenship has been a long-term tradition at the University of Oregon. Misinformation and the lack of original research will continue to rise without programs like forensics. While we witness alarming increases in young adults' loneliness and isolation, speech and debate provides community and connection. In a climate of political division, speech and debate promotes dialogue across differences in policy-making and problem-solving. These skills strengthen one's ability to thrive in every industry and facet of life.

It is my hope that the University of Oregon will reflect on the incredible impact of this program to their own students, high school students, and the strength of critical thinkers across the nation. It is essential to reconsider proposed changes to University of Oregon Forensics. Maintaining this program is critical to the status of a comprehensive educational experience.

Sincerely,

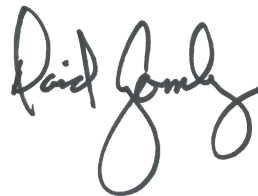


Representative McLain, House District 29

With support from:



Senator Manning, Senate District 7



Representative Gomberg, House District 10



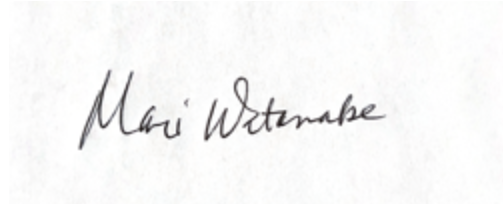
Representative Anderson, House District 19



Representative Rieke Smith, House District 26

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cyrus Javadi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cyrus" being more prominent than the last name "Javadi".

Representative Javadi, House District 32

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mari Watanabe". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Mari" and the last name "Watanabe" clearly legible.

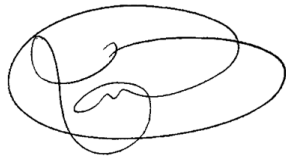
Representative Watanabe, House District 34

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nosse". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first letter "N" being particularly large and prominent.

Representative Nosse, House District 42

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. Levy". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "E." and the last name "Levy" clearly legible.

Representative E. Levy, House District 53

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "McIntire". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first letter "M" being particularly large and prominent.

Representative McIntire, House District 56