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ABOR votes unanimously to oppose HB 2359

(Phoenix, Ariz.) – In a special meeting today, the Arizona Board of Regents voted unanimously to oppose HB 2359, which would delegate the authority and powers of the Arizona Board of Regents to three university boards.

“This bill strikes at the heart of the design and purpose of the Arizona Board of Regents, a board that works on behalf of the citizens of this state to strengthen our state’s universities and reform public higher education in a way that contributes to their viability and produces greater results for students, the economy and the public,” said Greg Patterson, board chair.

The bill would gut the authority of the constitutionally established board of regents. The board’s existing fiduciary and legal authority would be assigned to three separate, paid local boards that would be staffed by the universities, thereby eliminating statewide independent and direct oversight of the universities. The bill would allocate advisory only responsibilities to the board of regents.

“I believe every citizen of this state should be deeply concerned about a law that would strip independent and autonomous oversight of our university system, an \$11 billion economic engine for our state,” said Eileen I. Klein, board president. “There is always room for improvement, but this bill would cease the meaningful reform and significant progress this board has made to tackle key challenges our state faces in ensuring public access and affordability to higher education.”

The board has forged an entrepreneurial approach to governing the university system which is more streamlined and focused on strategic decision making, long-term competitiveness, transparency and quality assurance. While the board recognizes the significantly different missions at each of the universities, this innovative operating model ensures the university system is efficient and reduces redundancy and duplication of programs and operation costs.

In just the past three years, the board has instituted major reforms in funding, tuition-setting, accountability and transparency ([click here for a report on recent board outcomes](#)). Reforms and achievements include development of a new state funding model to support resident-students; implementation of strategic 2025 goals to achieve crucial outcomes for the state; introduction of cost predictability and stability through new tuition guarantees; implementation of fee and billing reform; improvement of student bill clarity; implementation of a taskforce to assess and enhance student safety on and off campus; and establishment of new tuition rates for Arizona high school graduates and members of Arizona tribal nations who do not otherwise meet residency requirements.

“The mission of our university system is to provide for educational opportunities that enable our state to have a competitive workforce, to actively discover new knowledge that can address many of our challenges, and to impact our state by applying this knowledge to create new companies and solve problems such as water resources, population health and more,” Patterson said. “This is a board of and for the people of this state to provide public accountability, fiduciary oversight and strategic direction for our public university system and to ensure Arizonans have access to a quality public university education. This bill ignores real and key facts on the achievements and efficient performance of our universities under the strategic leadership of the board of regents.”