



February 22, 2021

Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Chair: Senator Michael Dembrow

Vice Chair: Senator Chuck Thomsen

Members: Senators Geiser, Gorsek, and Robinson

900 Court St., N.E.

Salem, OR 97301

Esteemed Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

Thank you for your leadership and service on this committee and for scheduling the public hearing on SB 551, which would provide healthcare for part-time faculty throughout Oregon.

My name is Adrienne Mitchell, President of Lane Community College Education Association, representing the 200 full-time and 375 part-time faculty of Lane Community College. I am speaking today **to urge you to pass this critical bill and to fully fund healthcare for part-time faculty**. While some part-time faculty at LCC receive employer-provided healthcare benefits, this is not the case in most of the community colleges throughout the state. At the rare colleges that do provide some healthcare benefits, the cost strains already skeletal budgets.

Within our community college system in Oregon, the vast majority of faculty members work part-time -- without job security, without pay equity, and without healthcare benefits.¹ Part-time faculty face precarity as contingent workers and are, in effect, part of what higher education researchers at USC Rossier School of Education have termed the "Gig Academy."²

A recent review of 2019-2020 part-time faculty salaries by the Oregon Education Association indicates that part-time faculty working half-time at Oregon community colleges earn, on average, **\$16,000 per year**. This annual salary amount falls below the threshold for SNAP eligibility for a single person. This statewide data mirrors surveys of LCC faculty. Our most recent survey of part-

¹ As of Fall 2018, a full 70.6% of faculty positions at Oregon's community colleges were part-time according to an analysis of National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

² Kezar, Adrianna, et al. *The Gig Academy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University (Reforming Higher Education: Innovation and the Public Good)*. Illustrated, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

time faculty indicates that **one in four part-time faculty have relied on government assistance** while working as faculty members at Lane Community College.

These are **poverty wages** necessitating government assistance, creating housing and food insecurity for the very faculty upon whom our institutions rely. Without part-time faculty, colleges would not meet student demand to fulfill the critical workforce development and transfer functions of the community college system.

Likewise, our students experience food and housing insecurity. The 2019 Hope Center survey of 8,100 students from 14 of the 17 Oregon community colleges found that **41%** of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days, and **52%** were housing insecure in the previous year.

Unfortunately, our community colleges remain gravely undervalued and direly underfunded in Oregon, leaving both part-time faculty and students alike in precarity. While the quintessential role of community colleges is to provide access to students who would not otherwise have an opportunity for higher education, to promote economic mobility and social justice for our diverse student population, the system is inherently unjust – built upon the exploitation of part-time workers.

At a bare minimum, the state should invest in community colleges and meet the most basic healthcare needs of part-time faculty **by passing SB 551 with full funding** so that faculty may, at least, have healthcare security as they work to serve students and the community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely and with deep appreciation for your service,
Adrienne Mitchell



Adrienne Mitchell, M.A., M.Ed.

President, Lane Community College Education Association,

representing the 375 part-time and 200 full-time faculty of LCC

Vice President, Oregon Education Association Community College Council

representing 4,000+ part- and full-time faculty and staff from 18 community college unions in OR