

My name is Stephanie Prentiss, and I work supporting students in the business office at the University of Oregon. I am also the President of Local 085 a sub local of SEIU 503 which represents about 1500 workers on the Eugene campus. I am submitting written testimony in favor of **Part-time Adjunct Faculty Health Care – Senate Bill 551**. This is an idea that has been discussed in the legislature for many years and passed in the Oregon House in 2019. It should now be made a part of Oregon’s public policy.

SEIU represents about 4500 workers on the seven University campuses – many of them low wage employees. Our classified members on university campuses maintain grounds and campus spaces; support libraries; IT; health services; nutrition and academic programs in most of the non-teaching and non-management positions on campus. At the same time, we see higher education issues from a second vantage point – a substantial number of our 80,000 statewide members are low wage earners; most without health care and retirement benefits. They and their families know that post-secondary training and education is the way out of poverty for their families; neighbors; clients and loved ones. We stand with all workers who deserve stability in workplace healthcare – especially in these times when benefits are under pressure. Too often during the COVID-19 pandemic, those Oregonians who lack access to health care have born disproportionate economic and health burdens.

Community colleges and universities have been reducing full-time faculty positions and increasing their reliance on part-time faculty for many years. Surprisingly, fewer than 30 percent of the instructional workforce in colleges and universities hold full-time tenured or tenure-track jobs, down from over 70% fifty years ago. Because of this shift, Oregon’s higher education system is increasingly reliant on part-time workers who deserve the peace of mind of affordable workplace healthcare. This couldn’t be more important than now during a pandemic.

As someone who has worked in higher education for the last 19 years - I am writing in strong support of SB 551. It is long overdue to grant part-time faculty employees who work across multiple higher education institutions access to workplace healthcare benefits. Allowing the aggregation of total hours and providing this needed assistance to faculty who are doing much of the teaching on state university and community college campuses is good public policy and critically, it is fair to these workers who are treated as an underclass in the higher education system. During this most critical time health insurance **MUST** be a primary focus to allow the security for workers

and their families. One visit to the emergency room could potentially cause bankruptcy, these workers are crucial to education, and our future!

I take great pride in working alongside students and faculty to improve our systems of state Higher Education. Thank you for consideration of this measure.

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President SEIU Local 085

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