

TO: Chair Dembrow
Vice-Chair Thomsen
Members of the Senate Education Committee

RE: SB 1572 -2, Support for Public Student Loan Forgiveness

February 8, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of amendments to SB 1572 which would improve accessibility and application of Public Student Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) for faculty in higher education.

I've been paying on my student loans since graduation over ten years ago. I have been working in my field (the arts / teaching) and paying my student loans on time each month, using plans like income-based repayment and the like to make it manageable. Due to the incredibly high interest rates, I've only seen my balance grow. Consistently paying toward these loans offers no assurance of getting ahead or paying it off. Today, my student loans are about \$26,000 over what my balance was when I started paying on them. If my loans were to be forgiven, I would have a brighter outlook on my future. I would have increased mental and physical well-being and I would be able to better my living situation and the lives of those around me.

The proposed language will greatly increase access to PSLF by adding a 4.35 hour per credit hour equivalency which accounts for lecture, classroom, prep and grading hours. Additionally, the proposed language will increase access through defining full-time as 30 hours and determining eligibility on a term basis. It is important that information about eligibility and access be provided to employees, and this language will ensure that happens for all of us.

We are grappling with the impacts of underfunding and irregular adjunct or temporary employment, which is all compounded by the burden of student loans.

These changes to improve PSLF eligibility will provide much needed relief for countless faculty across Oregon, recognize our contributions to the public good, and ensure a secure financial future in order to continue in the profession. Public higher education teachers work to educate our public and our public service must meaningfully count towards PSLF.

I look forward to your support of SB 1572 as amended.

Sincerely,

Lori Gilbert