

# Ashland High School

*Inspiring learning for life!*

**BENJAMIN BELL, Principal**

Date: March 23, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Education  
From: Shane Abrams, Ashland High School (formerly Portland State University and Portland Community College)  
RE: Support for SB 416 and Pay Equity

Chair Dembrow, Vice-Chair Weber, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shane Abrams, and I am writing to express **support for Senate Bill 416**, which will help bridge the widening gap between the pay for part-time and full-time faculty members in our higher education system and bring better equity, stronger retention, and increase overall outcomes for students.

Institutions of higher education are increasingly dependent on so-called “contingent” labor of adjunct faculty. When I was a writing instructor and writing tutor at Portland State University and Portland Community College, students frequently told me they had spent the majority of their two- and four-year experiences in the classrooms of adjuncts. My colleagues and I wrote numerous letters of reference for employment and graduate school, not because we were most qualified but because we were the only teachers with whom the students had formed meaningful connections. Student wellbeing and the practical operation of colleges depends on adjuncts, and they deserve equitable pay for their essential roles.

As a highly qualified educator emerging from my master’s degree program – and the consequent debt – I was eager to find sustainable work empowering college students through writing and literature. I accumulated a courseload bit-by-bit across three institutions of higher education until I was working 60-hour weeks, supplemented by two weekend shifts tending bar. My employed spouse and I still couldn’t make ends meet, and I was forced to leave the field. The current disparities in adjunct wages and benefits is highly unsustainable. In a time of budget crisis, institutions will not address inequities without legislative compulsion – and more and more passionate educators will burn out, imperiling the higher education model and our future generations more generally.

This bill adds a pay ratio between full time and part time faculty that is a first step towards improvements to our higher education system that will benefit students, faculty, and the community.

**This is why I urge your yes vote on SB 416.** Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Shane Abrams