

Testimony in Support of HB2669 on Feb. 6, 2025 (remote)

My name is Chris Nordquist, and I am a part-time writing instructor at Portland Community College, where I've been teaching for the past 15 years—although I have a doctorate in English and have been teaching at the college level for over 35 years now, always part-time but through no fault of my own. I am writing in strong support of HB 2669 regarding pay parity for part-time college instructors.

Thanks to an overabundance of advanced degrees in English at the time I graduated with a doctorate (ABD) from the University of Washington 30 years ago, where I'd been awarded a full teaching fellowship and where I'd won several prestigious academic and teaching awards, I've been a near-poverty-level, part-time writing instructor my entire adult life, and I've seen firsthand how my devotion to my craft and my students has been unfairly exploited by the community college system.

Not only do I lack job security (for far too often a class or two I've been assigned to teach has been cancelled at the last minute, leaving me either jobless or under-employed at short notice), but, as a single home-owner, I have to supplement my meagre part-time pay for the classes I DO teach by taking on a bunch of other “gig” work, like freelance editing and tutoring private students. (Indeed, I've occasionally made the mistake of keeping track of all my teaching, prep, and grading hours and was horrified to learn that I was averaging less than \$10 per hour—and I have a doctorate!)

Although I'm NOT a mathematician, I can confidently assert that several part-time jobs take far more time and energy—and end up paying far less!—than does one full-time college teaching job. And although I'm not technically required to serve on various committees, as are many of my full-time colleagues, I often end up doing so because the need is so great and I'm so deeply committed to my students and colleagues. Consequently, I work even harder than most of my full-time colleagues for about half the pay! Indeed, many of us part-timers do so in the false hope we'll eventually get hired full-time. It's deeply unfair, exploitative—and exhausting!

To be honest, things are so bad that I'm now facing retirement age with hardly *any* life savings with which to retire!—and there have even been times I've had to actually go on food stamps, something I'm deeply ashamed to admit but will confess here in order to let you know the severity of our situation as part-time faculty. This long-standing situation for us is both unfair and untenable, and I strongly urge you to support this important bill.

Thank you for listening.