

March 26, 2017

Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of **SB196**.

Since 1972, I have been an educator in Oregon. I have a Master's degree in Education. For eighteen years, I worked full-time teaching social studies classes at Parkrose High School. Over the last twenty-seven years, I've worked part-time teaching GED classes at Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College. Since 1995, I've served as the president of MHCC's Part-time Faculty & Tutor Association (PFTA.)

As a part-time instructor, I've experienced many of the challenges faced by part-time faculty. One of those is the cost of health insurance. At its highest, I paid \$660 per month for my medical and dental insurance premium. The cost of my health insurance was a key reason why I had to work at least two – sometimes, three – jobs. About ten years ago, I was very glad that I had insurance. My cardiologist called to let me know that he'd scheduled me for a valve repair surgery. The surgery went well. If I hadn't had insurance, I would have had a bill of over \$60,000. Can you imagine how trying to pay off that bill would impact your life? Thankfully, I didn't have that hanging over my head.

As the PFTA President, I've learned about others' challenges. Many part-time faculty -- with Master's or PhD's -- don't have enough income to purchase health insurance. They love teaching, but some leave teaching for jobs with benefits. Others struggle to pay bills when they arise. One of those is "Anne" (not her real name):

"Anne" taught part-time at both PCC and MHCC. She is a divorced mother of five, whose children were covered under their father's insurance. She couldn't afford to purchase insurance for herself. When she was diagnosed with colon cancer, she had the required surgery. She ended up with a bill of over \$55,000.

As a hard-working professional, Anne hadn't been able to afford health insurance, so I doubt that she was successful in paying that bill. But, if she'd had a reasonable insurance premium, she would have paid it monthly, and her portion of the surgery costs would have been much less.

Like many educators, I love teaching and enjoy helping students achieve their goals. Educators provide a significant benefit to their communities. Understandably, they're able to do their best work for their students when they're healthy. Our communities need to show their support for the work these educators do.

SB196 would enable those part-time faculty who teach enough to qualify for PERS to purchase health insurance at an affordable rate. Community colleges would benefit by having a healthier workforce. Full-time faculty would benefit by having more stability within the part-time faculty workforce. Students would benefit by having healthy instructors who can devote more time to their class preparation rather than working a second or third job.

Financially, there will never be a perfect time to tackle this issue. But, if Oregon wants to get and keep quality part-time instructors at its community colleges, SB196 has the potential to do that. It would make a significant difference in the lives of many of those instructors.

I urge you to support SB196.

Marilyn Pitts
GED Instructor & PFTA President