



Date: March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
To: Senate Committee on Education  
From: Marta D. Kunecka, Adjunct Professor, Oregon Education Association Member  
Re: Support for SB 196

Chairman Roblan and members of the committee:

My name is Marta Kunecka. I work as an adjunct philosophy professor at Oregon State University, Chemeketa Community College, and Linn Benton Community College both in Albany and in the Benton Center in Corvallis. I hold a PhD in philosophy and have over a decade of experience as an educator in Oregon and abroad.

I want to urge you to support SB 196 to address the state's increasing reliance on part-time faculty working at multiple institutions of higher education and the lack of access to affordable healthcare for those part-time faculty.

I came to the United States ten years ago to complete my doctoral research and I've worked in education in Oregon ever since. In the meantime, I have become a single parent and a home owner, and I decided to make this enchanting and peaceful state home for me and for my daughter, a home where she will acquire her own education over the years. Because of this decision and because the state has few tenure-track positions available, I'm confined to working as an adjunct professor. I love teaching, and I'm fortunate to teach in Oregon. But the system currently in place presents several big challenges, one of them being the health care issue.

At this time, I do not receive health-insurance benefits like other full-time faculty even though between all of my positions I work more than full time (1.5 – 1.75 full-time equivalent each term). My current yearly income puts me in the gap between making too much money to qualify for state insurance and yet not making enough to cover my health insurance costs (with increasing premiums each year) out of my own pocket.

Each day, after dropping my daughter off to school, I commute back and forth among four different campuses. The time I spend commuting every week amounts to another .25 FTE that I'm not paid for. I often ask myself whether the extra effort is worth it, and I always come to the same conclusion: It is worth it because I'm educating young people.

I have acquaintances who receive state subsidies including full health care coverage while not working the long hours that I do. They work in industries other than education, which do not require constant availability and attention, and in positions that do not address the intellectual needs of young Oregonians. Hearing these stories, I'm often confronted with the thought of either leaving academia for an alternate field or of working less in order to ensure more security for myself and my daughter, that is contributing less while receiving more state benefits.

But this is not a valid option for me. Teaching is my passion. I want to continue teaching and contributing to the betterment of our communities. I'm a committed and valued professor, and I care deeply about increasing philosophical awareness and reinforcing critical thinking skills for young Oregonians, to ensure that those who graduate from our colleges are informed, educated and equipped to participate in the commercial, civic and political life of the state.

But the fact remains: none of my workplaces offer the health-care benefits I need.



SB 196 addresses this problem by requiring public institutions of higher education to use the total hours worked by a faculty member working at multiple institutions when determining eligibility for health benefits. And those faculty who qualify for health-care benefits would only pay 10 percent of insurance premiums, with the remaining 90 percent paid by the state. This would close what is effectively a loophole that allows colleges and universities to hire collectively while collectively denying benefits they would otherwise be required to pay.

I ask you to approve senate bill 196 to support hardworking educators, like me, who have been deprived of this critical service because although they work full time in public education, they don't do so at a single institution.

We will continue taking care of our students. Please take care of us.

Thank you for your time.

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