

I am writing as your constituent and as a long-time Community College Part Time Teacher to urge you to support SB 196.

I have been teaching in Oregon since 2001, as an adjunct instructor at 2 community colleges and one private college. When I first taught at Clackamas Community College, I was also going to school for my second Bachelor's degree at a private for-profit Oregon school, a BS, after having received a MFA and BFA years earlier, because the first internet bubble had burst and in order to stay gainfully employed I had to bolster my skills to work professionally.

At that point in time, being able to teach part-time was a great way to earn income for living, while taking out student loans for my new schooling.

After graduation, working in the multimedia field and teaching these skills to students was a hard but satisfying life. I soon found out that if and when I wanted to teach full-time and finally receive benefits that full-time teachers receive, the opportunities to do so were slim to none. I learned from other teachers that this had not been the case 20 or 30 years earlier, and that part-time faculty now made up as much as 70% of the Community College faculty workforce. I also learned that many part-time instructors were working as much as full-time teachers without benefitting from getting paid for class prep, office hours, grading time, sabbaticals, and of course perhaps the most important for living, health insurance.

In addition, much of the part-time teachers' day may be taken up by driving to different schools, further cutting into the unpaid time needed for class prep and grading. (Not to mention increasing traffic problems and pollution.)

As I understand it, this is of course to save money for the institutions. Every year since 2001 I have heard the same thing about schools' budgets: times are tight and more cuts are needed. This is the swan song of the colleges no matter if the economy is doing great or doing poorly.

It should be obvious that the harder a teacher struggles to make a living, and pay for simple necessary living expenses, the less time and focus is spent on giving one's all to students' needs, and education suffers.

In addition, without being able to afford health care, teachers may let preventable health issues grow and become more expensive than they need to be, leading to more absences and expenses further on down the line.

SB 196 provides that part-time faculty members who qualify for health care benefits will pay 10 percent of insurance premiums, with remaining 90 percent paid by state. The legislation also requires the Higher Education Coordinating Commission to ensure that any policy adopted by public institution of higher education for determining whether part-time faculty members are eligible for health care benefits uses aggregate total of hours worked by faculty member at all public institutions of higher education.

This will allow hard-working educators to access the healthcare benefits we deserve. Part-time faculty do the same work in the same institutions as their peers – and often put in more hours – but they are not eligible to receive health insurance coverage through their employers.

Frankly this bill doesn't go far enough to ensure that Oregon's educational system continues to increase in value for students and for the economy of Oregon, but it is an excellent start.

I would greatly appreciate your support. Thank you for your time.

Chris Dreger

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