

March 28, 2017

Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

I am writing in support of SB196.

I have been working in the community college system since 2000. 14 of those years were in Michigan, and the past three at Mt. Hood Community College, in Gresham.

Currently, I serve as the Dean of the Humanities, Mathematics and Social Sciences Divisions at MHCC, however, the plight of a part time faculty member is never far from my mind. When I began my teaching career, I began as an adjunct faculty member. Even though I was teaching five to seven classes a semester at three different colleges, I was barely taking home \$10,000 a year and could barely pay my rent, let alone pay for health insurance. I taught a full time load, but I had none of the benefits of my full time colleagues. I was lucky, at the time, that my partner had health insurance and because we got married, I had health insurance too. Despite having an MFA, I was always on the brink of financial ruin, and when I became a single parent, I do not know how I would have survived as an adjunct faculty member.

In my current position as a college administrator, I understand that colleges are relying more and more on adjunct labor for cost savings. As state and federal support for education diminishes, college administrations are less likely to hire full time, tenure track faculty and instead rely on part time faculty to teach our students. I became a college administrator in part because I do not think this model is a sustainable one, and I am working from within to help change the way we value education and educators. I see my own adjunct instructors—all of whom have advanced degrees and all of whom work tirelessly for our students—struggle financially and have to make difficult decisions: health insurance or pay the rent? Food or school supplies? It infuriates me because I do not believe health insurance should be a privilege of the wealthy, and I know our colleges would collapse without our adjunct labor to hold them up. SB196 would provide part time faculty who teach enough to qualify for PERS to purchase health insurance at an affordable rate. My divisions would benefit because my faculty would have the peace of mind to know that they could prioritize their health without giving something else up.

I urge you to support this bill.

Sara Rivara

Dean of Instruction, Humanities, Mathematics and Social Science

MHCC