

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee,

I have been a part-time instructor with Clackamas Community College for nearly twenty years. In all those years, I have been eligible to receive healthcare coverage for only two. I had been paying my own insurance through Obamacare because it was the only option open to me, and I was so thrilled when I got a notice from the college three years ago, telling me that I'd worked enough hours to qualify for health insurance. Even then, I chose the lowest-cost plan with the least amount of coverage because my income is so unpredictable; I didn't feel comfortable getting the better plan which I would have had to supplement through my own income. My schedule is also unpredictable, so I never know if I will meet the number of hours that are required to be eligible for insurance.

After having insurance for two years, I received another letter from the school, telling me that they were no longer going to pay for my coverage. I was devastated. It seemed almost cruel that I had finally gotten healthcare coverage, only to have it ripped away from me. I'm 60 years old. My health is fantastic, but I'm working way harder than someone my age should have to, just to make ends meet. And now I didn't even have insurance. I tried really hard not to let it affect my morale, but it really felt like a betrayal.

Now I've been put back on. But for only one year. I have no idea if it will continue. That is the uncertainty that part-time faculty deal with, not just with health care, but with their jobs overall.

I've been here twenty years. I am an asset to my school. Take a look at my student and peer evaluations; I receive very high marks and students continually request to be in my classes. I have been asked to rewrite multiple curricula. If they counted all the extra hours I work to make sure I'm doing what's best for my students, I would certainly qualify for healthcare. I do it because I love my students and I love this job, and I want to serve my community, but I can't work any harder than I already am. It's heartbreaking that I have devoted twenty years of my life to an institution and instead of being appreciated and respected, I've had to become a subcontractor with several different companies because I cannot afford to live on my part-time employment with the college. I work more than full-time, and yet I don't have health insurance.

I love what I do, and I do it very well. That's what keeps me motivated, but it certainly is not a fair trade. It makes me sad because I wonder how schools like mine are going to keep attracting quality instructors. This is arguably the most important profession of all; how are our students going to learn the skills they need to be successful in the real world without instructors who have the kind of experience that I have?

I work just as hard as any full-time instructor. I deserve the respect and investment that my full-time counterparts get from our institution. Please help me get the health care I need and deserve, and please vote "yes" on SB 551.

Maria Julia Sorrentino