

Chair Read, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Rob Fullmer, and I am testifying in favor of continuing university shared services via HB 2611. I have worked at Portland State University for the past decade providing IT planning and support to students and faculty. I currently serve on the strategic planning committee for PSU, am a member of SEIU 503, helped form and lead our campus' student and worker coalition Together 4 PSU, and represent non-faculty employees of Oregon public community colleges and universities as a commissioner on the HECC.

In 2011-12 I served on the SB 242 Health & Welfare Plan Option Review Committee that looked at pulling OUS institutions out of PEBB as one possible health insurance option. While OUS as a whole may have had a large enough covered membership to mitigate against the reduction in overall pool size that separate coverage would require, individually the universities do not, and the costs if one or more institutions withdrew would necessarily go up. In 2012, the review committee concluded that OUS staying in PEBB was what was best for OUS workers and for the state of Oregon. What was a bad idea then for OUS is a worse one now for individual institutions.

Changing gears from benefits to collective bargaining, another critical aspect of this bill - as the PSU member of the classified worker bargaining team in 2011-13 contract negotiations, I saw how challenging it was to get equal pay for equal work across the state and the pressure felt by institutions, particularly the TRUs, to balance their budget by offering represented university workers a poor contract. In the previous 2009-11 contract classified workers took furloughs while other employees at most institutions did not - we have historically had a hard time getting a fair contract.

The budget pressures and decline in state funding for the universities has been particularly difficult for the TRUs and this has meant that we have continued to feel squeezed on campus. The reality is, being an office specialist or electrician at OIT or PSU or UO requires the same background and skill and should be paid the same, but because some campuses face different financial pressures, we have found that the budgets at the TRUs have nearly led to a strike the last 2 contracts. In addition to making sure that people get paid fairly across the state, breaking up the bargaining unit would be an additional cost to the universities. Over time we will need to come up with new ways to bargain with the seven campuses since there is no longer a system, but it doesn't make sense to have seven different bargaining tables all at the cost to students and taxpayers.

Despite many years of trying to improve wages, over a quarter of the workers SEIU represents are still food stamp eligible. Keeping our bargaining unit together at least gives us a chance to continue to try to change that, and reduce inequality by negotiating a living-wage contract for the lowest paid workers at Oregon's universities.