

To: House Committee on Business and Labor  
Date: April 14, 2015  
Re: HB 3508

Chair Holvey, members of the committee:

My name is Melisa Crosby and I am about to “celebrate” my 25<sup>th</sup> year at Portland Community college with a significant drop in income and the loss of my health benefits for at least 12 months.

I am writing in support of HB 3508.

I began my career as an adult ESL teacher at Portland Community College in 1990. When I was originally hired, there were no benefits available for part time instructors: no health coverage, no sick days, no retirement. As PCC has increased its percentage of part time faculty, we have seen gains in benefits. We were eligible for PERS in 2000 and, after years of efforts, part time instructors were given access to health coverage in 2008.

In recent years, the program in which I taught 12 hours a week (as many hours as permitted under PCC’s part timer rules) has been subject to drastic cuts. I am now down to 6 instructional hours a week at PCC which is the bare minimum to maintain eligibility for health insurance. Recently I learned that my one class would be canceled for the summer and if I don’t find a part time position next term, I will lose my eligibility for health coverage through PCC for the next academic year. Given the late notice I was given and the high demand for teaching positions at PCC, I have secured nothing for summer, despite my ongoing efforts and excellent work history.

Of course, my 6 hours a week at PCC isn’t enough to support my family. In the last two years I have worked at four different institutions, sometimes driving as many as 250 miles a week, just to stay above water. As a part timer I can be hired and fired at will and I have very little protection. I often have no assurance of employment beyond the next 8-10 weeks. I can’t make plans as I have no job security. But the one thing I had was health coverage. And now I’m about to lose that after 25 years of excellent work for Portland Community College.

Most adjunct faculty rely on summer teaching appointments to make a year-round living, we don’t have the luxury of taking summers off as is the perception of many tenure-track faculty. The kind of uncertainty we face on summer teaching is not a reasonable reassurance of reemployment. We deserve access to unemployment insurance benefits just like any other worker who finds themselves unemployed over the summer.

Adjunct faculty now do the bulk of teaching at Oregon’s colleges and universities. While our numbers have increased significantly, our pay, benefits, and status have not kept pace. Our employers rely on the contingent faculty system, expecting us to give our utmost while making virtually no commitments to us. We work as hard as full time faculty, but with the additional

stresses of uncertain job security, last minute schedule juggling, an inordinate amount of time spent commuting, lack of workspace, and the constant message that we are second class citizens in our academic communities. Granting access to summer unemployment insurance benefits is a small step forward addressing the imbalances of a very flawed system. I urge you to support HB 3508.