

April 15, 2015

To: Senate Workforce
From: Melissa Tennyson
Re: Support of SB 888

Dear Chair Dembrow and Committee Members,

My name is Melissa Tennyson, and I am a single mother living in Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony.

I hold a PhD in American Studies and I'm capable of teaching full-time at a college or university. I have been working tirelessly to find a permanent teaching position that will allow me not only a decent wage but a predictable schedule. As a working mother, both are critical. Without a decent wage I can't afford the basics for myself and my daughter. But a predictable schedule is just as important because I need to be able to plan for things like child care and I need to know what my income is going to be from month to month.

I have been trying hard to find a permanent teaching position, but so far I have had to piece together part-time adjunct instructor jobs at community colleges in the Portland metro area and at online schools, with no benefits or job security. Currently I teach for two online schools. I am paid per class, and my income amounts to less than minimum wage, once all my teaching time, prep time, grading, conferences with students, and office hours are accounted for. Also, the schools that I work for do not guarantee my job status or teaching load beyond the current term. That means that every 6 to 8 weeks I don't know if I will have an income.

Because of this lack of predictability, I can't maintain a consistent budget. I am also not able to involve my daughter in many extracurricular activities because I cannot afford the expenditures. I have chosen to live with my mother in order to alleviate some of the financial burden and insecurity of those months when I cannot afford to pay rent because of a reduced teaching load.

Workers in Oregon need predictability in their job schedules as much as we need fair wages. We need to know when we will be working and how much we will be working. As it is now, too many working people have no idea what their schedule or income will be after this week. This creates chaos, for workers and also for their families.

SB 888 will reduce this chaos and make a difference for working families. I urge you to support Oregon's workers by passing this bill.

Thank you.

