



## Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers

Local 2278, AFT, AFL-CIO

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Western Oregon University, Monmouth, OR 97361

*Representing Faculty at WOU since 1974*

**From: Mark Perlman, President of the Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers, Local 2278, AFT-Oregon, AFT, AFL-CIO**

**Date: April 16, 2015**

**Re: SB 702**

I am Dr. Mark Perlman, Professor of Philosophy at Western Oregon University and President of The members of the faculty union at WOU, the Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers. I am here to urge the Oregon legislature to pass SB 702.

Non-tenure-track faculty (also sometimes known as “adjunct” faculty) make up a large portion of the faculty at our state universities. There is a national trend to depend ever more on such faculty to teach classes at state universities – budget pressures force universities to hire these non-tenure-track faculty because they can be paid less for their high quality teaching. These faculty members have at least Master’s degrees, and many of them have doctorates, but teach classes for far less salary than tenured and tenure-track faculty. It is no exaggeration to say that these faculty members are being exploited, providing an essential component of higher education but at lower pay than their tenure-track and tenured colleagues.

Many of these faculty are teaching full-time, and some even more than the level of ‘full-time’, but receive no benefits because they are not doing all this teaching at any single college or university more than half-time. Instead they teach one or two classes at, say, PCC or PSU, then jump in the car, drive to a different campus, and teach another one or two classes at WOU or LCC or LBCC or OSU or U of O. My colleague in philosophy at WOU lives in Springfield, drives over an hour each way to teach at WOU, and has in the past also taught some classes at PSU – with no allowance for gas money. It is hard to grade papers and exams while driving on I-5, but many non-tenure-track faculty spend a large portion of their days moving from campus to campus, just to have enough classes to make a living. There would be more of these folks here today to testify, but they are too busy teaching or driving between campuses. These people are teaching full-time for the State of Oregon, educating our students, but left out in the cold as far as health benefits are concerned only because they do their teaching at multiple campuses. This is obviously unfair.

SB 702 would remedy at least some of the unjustness of the exploitation of these highly qualified and dedicated university teachers, by allowing them to combine all their teaching at any Oregon community college or state university to sum up to qualifying for health care benefits. Oregon already allows them to combine their service for purposes of PERS, and this bill would expand that to PEBB as well. Oregon owes it to these hard-working educators to treat them decently, and allow them to be considered full-time employees if they work full-time in total for the state’s colleges and universities, but at different venues. It is crucial for their personal well-being to have access to good health care that they can afford. They are already the lowest paid of all educators at community colleges and state universities, and many of them simply cannot afford independent health care on their low salaries. Some of them are barely making ends meet and providing food and housing for themselves and their families as it is, and a large percent of them are paid so little as to qualify for food stamps. SB 702 is simply the moral duty of the citizens of Oregon – to treat people educating our college and university students with respect and dignity for their dedicated and expert work. Please help us treat these educators better by passing SB 702.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mark Perlman, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy, Western Oregon University

President, Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers, Local 2278, AFT-Oregon, AFT, AFL-CIO