

Chair Roblan, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. For the record my name is Rob Fullmer; I have worked at Portland State University for the past decade providing IT planning and support to students and faculty. I am a member of SEIU 503 and represent non-faculty employees of Oregon public community colleges and universities as a commissioner on the HECC. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 2611.

In 2011-12 I served on the SB 242 Health & Welfare Plan Option Review Committee that considered 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 university workers and for the state of Oregon. That is still true today. This bill would have universities continue to participate in PEBB and PERS for the next four years, providing stability and quality for these essential benefits that workers have sacrificed other compensation for over decades to maintain at a high level.

Changing gears from benefits to collective bargaining, - as the PSU member of the classified worker bargaining team for the 2013-15 contract, I saw how challenging it was to get equal pay for equal work across the state and the pressure felt by institutions 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. 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. 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.