

April 12, 2017

Chair Holvey and Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor,

My name is Miguel A. Goni and I am a Professor in the College of Earth, Ocean & Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University. I have worked at Oregon State University for 12 years. During that time I've had the privilege of working on research projects both here in Oregon and around the world, including studies of the Louisiana coast after Hurricane Katrina, looking at the changing conditions in the arctic, and examining river and coastal systems here in Oregon. These projects have generated in excess of 7.5 million dollars in research funds. These funds have created numerous research opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students, and have been used to employ three faculty research assistants.

I love the work I do, I care deeply for my students, and I am grateful that I spend each day on the forefront of cutting-edge climate change research. But unlike thousands of my colleagues throughout Oregon's public universities, I lack basic protections and rights on the job. That's why I'm testifying today in favor of House Bill 3170.

House Bill 3170 would give me the choice to join a union and to finally have crucial legal protections for academic freedom in an age where science and research are under attack. It would also provide stability from the often-uncertain process of securing grant funding in order to maintain a position and continue vital research. That process will only get harder as the Trump Administration continues to halt grant funding for key scientific research and has signaled deep cuts to domestic agencies that fund research at Oregon State. Access to collective bargaining is the only real way to provide protection for such attacks.

As one of the many faculty members at Oregon State University whose job description is strongly tied to externally-funded research grants, I rely on faculty research assistants (FRAs) and post-doctoral researchers (postdocs) to complete this critical part of my job. Because of this reliance, I am considered a "supervisor" and cannot belong to a union.

Although officially recognized as supervisors, principal investigators like me consider FRAs and postdocs colleagues and collaborators and critical parts of our research teams. Principal investigators at OSU are extremely successful in proposing and securing grants from state and federal agencies, private foundations and international institutions. Our jobs would be impossible without the collaboration and participation of FRAs and postdocs. We often work together side by side in both lab and field conditions to achieve the goals identified in our externally funded research grants and to develop new knowledge required to formulate new hypotheses and future successful grants.

To continue and expand our research enterprise and maintain and grow our job satisfaction, it is critical that we be allowed to join a faculty union that will facilitate collective bargaining with the OSU administration. Principal investigators like me desire to be full participants in our faculty union while preserving our ability to work and collaborate with FRAs and postdocs.

The cutting-edge research conducted at OSU provides benefits to the university, local economies, students, and Oregonians at-large. Let's stand together to provide protections for that research and the hard working people who perform it. I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 3170, so that I may have the same rights and responsibilities as thousands of my fellow faculty throughout Oregon's public universities.

Sincerely,

Miguel A. Goni