

April 12th, 2017

Chair Holvey and Members of the Business and Labor Committee

Hi, my name is Jesse Muratli, and I am a Senior Faculty Research Assistant at Oregon State University, in the College of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Science (CEOAS). I have been working here for over seven years now, focusing on climate research for both the modern and the ancient earth. On a daily basis I use scientific instruments worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and I am one of the primary trainers of students on these instruments.

I am writing in support of HB 3170. As my job title implies, I am a faculty member at OSU. However, my position in my college is defined as research assistance only, so that while my salary is 100% funded by grants that have to be applied for, it is not in my position description to write proposals for my own grant funding. Historically, Research Assistants in CEOAS have had a supervisor that they work with, whose grant proposals include the funding that pays for their salary.

My situation is not so fortunate, as my primary supervisor cannot independently fund me. I have cobbled together a position where I work for many different people, and in sum I have a full-time position. The effect of this improvisation is that I work under a wide variety of people. In 2016 alone, I worked on over 12 different projects for 10 different people, across three different colleges at OSU. Less than half of that time was work done for the person who is my “supervisor.” Under the current law, I am unsure if I am negating the collective bargaining rights of one person who I don’t even work half time for, or if I am negating the collective bargaining rights of 10 different people – some of whom I worked for one week or less in 2016. If hiring me to do research means becoming ineligible for collective bargaining rights, fewer of my colleagues might be willing to pay for my expertise.

In my position, I do not have the luxury to lose benefactors who contribute to my salary. My position is renewed annually, but if my grant funding were to run out before my contract is up I would be out of a job the very next day. There is no safety net, no bridge funding available to cover me– or others like me– should this situation occur. As I mentioned previously, I am not allowed to raise money for my own salary, so I am at the mercy of both the grant-writing skills of other people and the US federal budget to make money available to fund these grants. This is why collective bargaining for myself as well as faculty who generate large grants is so important, it could mean a lifeline for Research Assistants in this time of uncertainty in federal science funding.

Thank you,

Jesse Muratli