



Service Employees International Union, Local 503, OPEU

April 12th 2017

House Business and Labor Chair Rep Paul Holvey; Vice Chairs – Rep Janelle Bynun; Rep Greg Baretto and Committee members.

My name is Len Norwitz – I work on the political staff of SEIU and I am writing in support of HB 3170 an act that extends collective bargaining rights to certain faculty members at public universities.

SEIU Local 503 represents about 4500 classified employees at the seven public universities - doing many of the jobs that keep the institutions running to successfully support and educate our students. We work in the libraries; admissions and accounting offices; providing academic department support; nutrition; health; childcare and legal work - and maintain buildings and grounds. We keep the lights on so things can get done. And we work closely with both teaching and research faculty – to accomplish the institution’s goals. We think of them as sisters and brothers in the efforts at hand.

As you know most faculty in Oregon’s public universities and community colleges are already represented by a union. However, there is currently a population of research faculty at Oregon’s public universities who cannot collectively bargain. We think that’s wrong. HB 3170 will allow all teaching and research faculty at public universities to have a voice in their workplace by providing access to collective bargaining rights – if they so choose – by amending the definition of supervisory employee to allow all university faculty to be included as public employees under PECBA (Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act).

Collective bargaining is the only mechanism that gives all workers – and in this case - faculty - enforceable legal protection to defend academic freedom in both teaching and research. As it stands, many researchers are excluded from this protection. In a time of increasing pressures on science and scientists (in particular those studying the climate and environment), access to collective bargaining is especially critical as it lends not only legal protections but a unified voice to defend researchers’ findings.

These excluded faculty know that most of their colleagues who are engaged in identical teaching, research, outreach, and service within public universities already enjoy the protections of collective bargaining under PECBA, yet they do not. HB 3170 would level the playing field. Please support this effort to allow them the choice that others on campuses enjoy.

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