

April 12, 2017

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

On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, I respectfully request your support for House Bill 3170. HB 3170 will provide a voice to public university research faculty in Oregon who currently lack the ability to collectively bargain. The bill is supported by a broad array of labor and environmental organization which is a testament to its broad ranging impact across Oregon.

AFT-Oregon represents approximately 15,000 Oregon workers in community college and universities in faculty, graduate employee, and classified positions, K-12 classified positions, and child care workers. The majority of our members work in public higher education. We represent public university faculty at the University of Oregon, Western Oregon University, Eastern Oregon University, and adjunct faculty at Portland State University. We also represent graduate teachers at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University and faculty at several public community colleges. In those institutions, our faculty unions work collaboratively with the administration on a variety of issues pertaining to the school. That model of shared governance and communication provides an immense benefit to all parties involved – especially the students.

However, in our work representing educators in public higher education, we have encountered a population of public university faculty who – unlike their colleagues who perform similar work - lack the ability to have a voice in their workplace. This is due to the fact that at a given time, they may have limited supervisory authority in order to direct cutting edge research work. However, these faculty are primarily focused on academic pursuits, just like their colleagues.

HB 3170 seeks to amend the definition of supervisor in Oregon's Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act (PECBA), only as it pertains to public universities (this does not include community colleges) and only as it pertains to faculty who have an academic focus. PECBA already grants collective bargaining rights to some workers with supervisory authority, including nurses and fire fighters. Charge nurses have had the right to join a union since 1995, a process which has worked well. This would simply add a third category for public university faculty.

The bill is also clear about who cannot join a union: public university administrators. This clear cut definition will ensure that a separation remains between true supervisors with administrative authority, and faculty who are focused on teaching and research.

HB 3170 will allow all teaching and research faculty at public universities to have a voice in their workplace – if they so choose. We urge your support for HB 3170.

Sincerely,



Marcus Swift
Director of Political and Legislative Affairs
AFT-Oregon