

April 14, 2017

Chair Greenlick and Members of the House Committee on Health Care,

On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, I'm testifying today in opposition to House Bill 3428. AFT-Oregon represents approximately 15,000 workers in Oregon's community college and universities in faculty, graduate employee, and classified positions, K-12 classified positions, and child care workers. Of our members who have access to affordable health care, most utilize either the Oregon Educator Benefits Board (OEBB) or the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB). This bill would negatively impact over 10,000 of our members who serve students every day in Oregon's schools.

It is important to start by viewing this bill in the broader context of public higher education in Oregon. Over the last four decades, Oregon's public community college and university systems have turned away from full time tenure-track faculty and become reliant on part time, contingent instructors. In Oregon, part-time faculty make up 70% or more of the total instructional staff at 12 of 17 community colleges. But despite working part-time at several different institutions, many part-time faculty are paid poorly and do not have access to employer-provided health insurance. Many of these part-time faculty are already struggling to make ends meet in a time of rising housing and food costs. To further erode health care benefits in this climate, will almost certainly harm our education system's ability to recruit and retain faculty in Oregon's public universities and community colleges.

We also have concerns about how this legislation would impact our public university faculty when they travel – which they are often required to do for their jobs. It is incredibly disturbing that a CCO may not be able to provide medical services when members are traveling outside the service area. Thus, if HB 3428 were to become law, Oregon's public university faculty would likely find themselves in a position where they would not have medical coverage if they traveled abroad for work, or even if they found themselves in certain parts of the U.S.

Last, but not least, we know that classified K-12 employees will suffer negative impacts from this bill. In the Hillsboro School District in 2016, the starting wage for a classified nutritional assistant was \$12.46 per hour. It is already difficult to survive at that wage and increased health insurance costs borne by employees will create financial hardship for those already struggling to make ends meet for their families.

Our faculty and staff do not work in education to become wealthy. They made a choice to serve students and their community because they believe in the power of education to transform students' lives. In each individual contract across the state, our educators make concessions and sacrifices in salary and other benefits for stable, quality health care. Additionally, each contract, each unit, at each institution is in a different stage of maturity. To unilaterally weaken their benefits disrespects the collective bargaining process and may force the contracts to reopen.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 3428.

Sincerely,



Marcus Swift
Director of Political and Legislative Affairs
AFT-Oregon