

March 11, 2019

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Education

From: Marilyn Pitts

Re: Support for SB 852

Chair Wagner, Vice-chair Thomsen, and members of the committee:

My name is Marilyn Pitts, and I am a part-time instructor at Mt. Hood Community College. I teach GED classes. In addition, I am president of the MHCC Part-time Faculty and Tutor Association, which represents approximately 450 part-time faculty and tutors at MHCC.

Since 1995, I've served as president of MHCC's PFTA. Over the years, I've heard from many part-time faculty and tutors about the lack of health care. When the PFTA has been in negotiations with the College, we have made a few gains related to health care. But, MHCC is well behind our colleagues in the Portland metro area. This year, we have \$47,500 to provide health insurance subsidies. As a result, only about 10 individuals are receiving those monthly subsidies. The subsidies are appreciated by the individuals who are receiving them, but there are many who aren't receiving any health insurance assistance from the College.

I'd like to share one of my personal experiences with health insurance. After teaching for 18 years at Parkrose High School, I decided to "graduate myself" and began teaching part-time at Mt. Hood Community College. I chose to continue paying for my individual health insurance. At its highest, I was paying over \$650/month. That was approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of what I was earning from my teaching assignment. Because I had a small inheritance from my mother, I was able to continue paying for my health insurance. About 15 years ago, I needed to have open heart surgery to repair my mitral valve. Thankfully, I had health insurance since the full cost was over \$50,000. Without health insurance, I could have been forced to sell my home in order to pay this bill. Since I had health insurance, I didn't have to sell my home or consider filing for bankruptcy.

One of our part-time instructors wasn't as fortunate. She was a divorced mother of five children, whose children were covered under their father's health insurance. Sadly, she had no health insurance. She was diagnosed with colon cancer, and her surgery and treatments cost over \$35,000. If SB 852 had been in place, she would have had most of those costs covered, as I had experienced. Instead, she was given a huge bill and faced uncomfortable options about what to do with that bill.

Part-time faculty who teach at the community college level hold master's degrees or have years of experience in their fields. They've worked hard to get to a point where they can teach others. In many cases, they're experts in their fields.

This bill would enable those part-time faculty who work enough to qualify for PERS to have most of their health insurance paid. It stops well short of providing health insurance to every part-time instructor, so the cost to provide this benefit is considerably less than it could be.

I want to thank Senator Dembrow and Representative Reardon for sponsoring this bill and the senators and representatives who have co-sponsored it.

I also want to thank the members of this committee for your consideration of this bill. I am certain it could make a huge difference in people's lives.

I urge your support for this bill.