

I'm writing to you today in hope that you will support HB 3007/SB 551, Part-Time Faculty Health Care.

Universities rely on part time faculty to teach more and more core classes. Full time positions for instructors are terminated to be replaced with several part time positions. These part time faculty are then being intentionally kept below benefits eligibility. I know this first hand as my own full time position that I was offered in 2014 was reduced to a part time position last year, and I know that I am far from alone in experiencing this. Such measures deplete the sense of community and give a serious blow to the morale of the instructors. Fully qualified instructors with a terminal degree in the field who worked for years to offer core classes to the institution are forced to either leave the profession altogether or line up several below benefits part time positions to stay afloat at least somehow.

All of the above has impact on their students, as hard as they may be trying to shield them from it. Our universities care about enrollment, but in order to achieve successful retention students need to have good learning experience in their core classes, including the introductory classes and the Baccalaureate core classes. Those classes are most exclusively taught by the part time instructors. As a result they are given the most high enrollment classes of the least prepared students for a fraction of pay and no benefits. If we want to make sure that the students have a good experience at the university we need to make sure that part time faculty have a reasonable life in which they can do what their passion is - to teach - and not spend every waking hour trying to cram in as many classes as possible to cover ever-increasing cost of living and the cost of health insurance which is not getting lower either.

During the pandemic the part time instructors were faced with unpaid switch to remote work to ensure that higher education does not come to a halt and that everyone stays safe in the process. Again, they were the ones hit with the largest Zoom rooms and the most urgent need to continue teaching. As the universities reopen the part time faculty will continue face the largest classrooms. Healthcare will be as important during the reopening as it is during the pandemic.

Please support AAUP's Part-Time Faculty Health Care bills (HB 3007/SB 551) in the name of hard working individuals with a passion to teach the next generation of students and in the name of those students themselves - your children, our children.

Sincerely,

Olga Iona Custer, Ph.D.