

Marilyn Pitts
HD 46
Mt. Hood Community College

Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Marilyn Pitts, and I am a part-time GED instructor at Mt. Hood Community College. In addition, since 1995, I've served as president of the MHCC Part-time Faculty and Tutor Association (PFTA,) which represents approximately 400 part-time faculty and tutors at MHCC.

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. We are well behind our colleagues in the Portland metro area. This year, we have a total of \$57,500 to provide health insurance subsidies. As a result, only 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" 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 the 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 551 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 the members of this committee for your consideration of SB 551, and I urge you to vote "yes". I am certain it could make a huge difference in people's lives.