

Testimony on SB 489
Senate Education Committee
March 17, 2023

Chair Dembrow and members of the committee, my name is Karen Smith, and I am the Senior Policy Advisor and General Counsel for the Oregon Community College Association. On behalf of Oregon's 17 community colleges, I appreciate the opportunity to submit written comments on SB 489.

OCCA has concerns that the proposed changes in SB 489 to expand unemployment insurance eligibility for non-professional education employees may have an impact on the colleges' already tight budgets. Our understanding is that this change would expand eligibility to an additional 18,550 employees, a portion of whom may work at community colleges, and who would be eligible to file for unemployment insurance during breaks. When asked, the Employment Department was unable to provide a breakdown of how many of these employees work at community colleges.

We would like to note that most community colleges are reimbursing employers for purposes of unemployment insurance; meaning that the cost of unemployment benefits for eligible employees is directly paid by the employing college on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Any change in unemployment eligibility for non-professional employees at educational institutions, including community colleges, will have a direct fiscal impact on college operations. Colleges have not budgeted for additional costs that might result if SB 489 is passed.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the committee on funding opportunities so as to avoid this potential unfunded mandate for the colleges.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.