

Chair Dembrow, Vice-chair Weber, and members of the Senate Committee on Education:

My name is Ariana Jacob, and I am an adjunct faculty member at Portland State University. I am also President of the American Federation of Teachers – Oregon, a labor federation whose membership includes faculty and graduate employees at nearly every public university in Oregon. I am here today to urge your support for Senate Bill 1552, in particular Section 35, pertaining to Part-Time Faculty Healthcare.

Adjunct faculty in our state are deeply grateful that Oregon leads the way nationwide in not only providing funding for this Part-Time Faculty Healthcare program but continues to make strides in improving access to the program.

The updated language and forthcoming amendments to Section 35 of SB 1522 will continue this work by ensuring that adjunct faculty who are eligible for this benefit are actually able to access it. What we learned this year was that some adjunct faculty who worked enough last year to cross the eligibility threshold were nevertheless barred from accessing health insurance because they had the unfortunate luck of not being assigned a class in fall term when the open enrollment period takes place. This change will make sure that all adjunct faculty who have qualified for this benefit will be able to access it no matter which terms in a year they are assigned to work, which is only fair.

Access to affordable healthcare continues to be a very high priority for adjunct faculty across the state. It is extremely scary to not know whether you will be able to enroll in this part-time healthcare benefit depending on which terms you are assigned to work.

The part-time faculty at our public colleges and universities are absolutely essential to our public higher education system. At Portland State we teach almost half of the classes, and on average part-time faculty remain at PSU for at least 7 years. These essential public workers need and deserve dependable access to state supported affordable healthcare. This bill helps us move one more important step in that direction.

Thank you for your time, and we again encourage your support for SB 1522.



Ariana Jacob  
President  
American Federation of Teachers - Oregon