

D. Eric Parkison

October 19th, 2021

The General Court of Massachusetts
Joint Committee on Public Service
Representative Kenneth I. Gordon, Chair
Senator Michael D. Brady, Chair

To Whom It May Concern:

This is my testimony in strong favor of S1732/H2723, An Act to Ensure fair public higher education workplaces act.

As the son of a garbage man and a lifelong factory worker and being among the first of my family to enter college, I was thrilled to work in public education. I have focused most of my attention on community college education in the firm belief that work for the common good in one's own community is a calling and a privilege.

But, among adjuncts there are a few truisms: once an adjunct, always an adjunct is one. The other is that you can expect to work harder, longer hours under worse conditions for fewer benefits than your full-time colleagues. I am stuck on what many call the "adjunct treadmill:" having worked in this position for more than half a decade creates a kind of employment inertia. No one looks to me when a full time position comes open. Why would they? I've been working classes for years for less pay and no benefits.

Let me tell you when schools do look to adjuncts. They look to us in emergencies. After a summer in which I had no work and had to rely on unemployment, after a spring in which enrollment plummeted due to the ongoing pandemic, we entered this fall semester with diminished hope for course assignments. In my own case, I received an offer of one contract for one class in the month before classes started. Then, a few weeks before classes started, I was offered three at another institution, one at another institution, two at another institution. I fielded emails from desperate department heads who didn't know how to staff classes after faculty quit, retired, or failed to show up.

As is the adjunct way, I took on many of the offered contracts. In this semester, I teach five classes at three institutions. Each of those institutions wants me *at their* meetings, doing *their* professional development, and maintaining my onsite office hours for them. I run from location to location grading papers on the MBTA while trying to update syllabi for classes which I am covering after unpredicted departures.

This is what the adjuncts do. We step in, we step up, we get the work done under circumstances most faculty wisely avoid or reject. And our reward is fewer benefits, lower pay, and no guarantee whatsoever that our working hard to save an institution this

fall means that they'll have us back to teach a class next spring. It'll be up to us to figure out how to maintain an income because we have no security at all.

This bill would *change* my life. It would provide me dignity in work I love. If you vote yes on this bill, you will help me earn what I deserve and help me provide for my family. You will help teachers restore their rightful place as dignified and socially valuable workers.

Please do the right thing and vote yes on this bill.

Best,
D. Eric Parkison