

S.1732/H.2723 Testimony: Nicole Williams

My name is Nicole, and I have been both a full and part-time faculty member in the English Department here at BSU over the last eleven years. I would like to begin with something one of my students sent to me.

*“The help, the love, and support that you have given is extreme for a teacher. You're not just an English teacher, you're a friend and a mother who cares for the best of us.”*

This was part of an email sent to me a few summers ago from a student that thought she would never make it through a semester of college. I have received many messages like this over the years, especially from the first generation college students I typically tend to work with in our award winning Enhanced Writing Program here at BSU.

I love my job. That is a fact. Ask anyone. They will tell you. I am here more hours than I probably should be. I do whatever I can to see my students achieve their goals.

But that is the nature of BSU faculty. We are here because we are passionate about our fields and about teaching.

Unfortunately, I have watched my own life continue to deteriorate in quality due to a lack of adequate benefits such as health insurance, minimal pay, and juggling of multiple jobs in hopes to piece together enough of a salary for my family to survive. I will be honest, there are times when I struggle to put food on the table for my two kids. Just last week I had to explain to my nine year old son that I was not sure he would be able to tryout for the soccer team because I did not have the money for the registration fee. I felt like a failure. Imagine being well educated, educating others, but failing your own children in their basic needs due to lack of equity in the workplace you dedicate yourself to.

And, sadly, I know I am one of many faculty across the state in this situation. My situation is not unique. In fact, it has become the normal. A colleague of mine at the university typically teach 12 classes at 5 campuses between the two of each semester. We try to schedule a get together just to give each other some support but with those kind of schedules you can imagine the kind of luck we have.

This life is surely not what I expected when I spent almost a decade in college and graduate school and wracked up thousands of dollars in student loans. I never expected to struggle to pay for childcare, healthcare, and educational programs for my children.

Some say why not leave this job? Why not find something else more stable?

Well, how do you leave the dream you worked so hard for? How do you leave the job where you know what you do matters every day? And what do you leave it for? A job where everything you make will go to childcare and you will be left in the same exact situation if not worse? How do you quit and walk away when the problem is not with you but a system that is not playing fairly?