

Chair Fateh and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

With reduced enrollments after the onset of COVID-19, TPT faculty in my department are often only able to get a full-time course load in the fall and have to accept just a part-time load in the spring. When that happens, it means that I qualify for full-time employer coverage one semester and only qualify for part-time employer coverage the next semester, causing my insurance costs to vary widely every 4 months. With myself and two little kids on my insurance, the cost of insurance with only a part-time employer contribution was a lot. Fortunately, I am married, and my husband has more stable, affordable insurance through *his* employer. We have stopped using my insurance because of the instability but, as the child of a single parent, I am very aware of just how lucky my kids and I are that we have that option.

On a different and (for me) bigger topic, my father is ageing and has been needing more and more help from me in a variety of ways. I am managing most of his finances (he is no longer able to), closing and reopening his accounts after he gets defrauded, bringing him to medical appointments, dealing with his 3 hospitalizations in the last 2 years, doing his laundry, picking up his dog's poop because he can't anymore, and so on. Last summer, I also coordinated the repair and sale of his house after finding a rental property that meet his needs (which was trickier than I anticipated), getting him moved, and selling the stuff that he was not going to keep. (No one else can help him with this; he is single, I am his only child, his only sibling is worse off than he is, and my cousins have their hands full with my uncle and aunt, as well as with their own children.) I also have a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old that I need to be present for. My father's three hospitalizations and the first three times he got defrauded all happened in the 2022-2023 school year and I was unable to keep up with my work, on top of everything else. I had to give up some of my course load in order to be able to coordinate all his medical care, protect his money, and start the process of fixing his house and finding a place for him to live. Because everything happened so fast, I was anticipating that he might continue a really precipitous decline.

When asking HR about my options, in case my father needed even more of my time (maybe needing me to coordinate a move to a nursing home asap), I was astounded to learn that I did not qualify for FMLA and that Minnesota's protections still did not even allow me to use all of my own accumulated sick leave to help my own father, much less providing me with any job security for when the next semester came around and my Dean had to decide whether or not to give me as much work as I wanted, knowing that my father might have another emergency that could take me away from my work again. And despite having worked for Normandale for 9 years, now, if my Dean decided not to give me as much work as I need, I would, of course, not be entitled to any type of severance or grace period with my insurance, because my contract only lasts for 1 semester at a time.

Before all this happened with my father, I had been working full-time at Normandale Community College for several years, but when my second son was born at the start of the summer in 2020, I couldn't handle all the extra work involved in moving classes online for COVID restrictions (and then continually fixing them because it was a pretty bad job at first and we had no dedicated time to make it better later on). I dropped down to part-time in order to balance caring for my newborn and my toddler, as well as trying to actually do a good job in the new world of online teaching that almost none of us had training or experience in. As a result, I did not have the right numbers of "hours" to qualify for FMLA when my father landed in the hospital (and then in my house for 1.5 months, afterward). (Of course, I had been actually *working* more than 40 hours a week on my school prep work and grading and all the rest of it, trying to make the online classes actually work for the students, but the extra time that all of us put in to

making the transition online work went completely unrecognized in calculations of our hours/week.) As I have been going through all of this,

I am continually reminded of just how lucky I am; I have a husband with a stable income and stable insurance. I can't imagine what I would do if I were in this situation as a single parent. I think I would have to just give up my father's care to social services and hope his social worker was able to anticipate/deduce all the major problems he experienced, as I did, before it was too late. I would also have significantly less time for my young children. And I would simply not be able to put in the amount of time and effort that I do for my students. I know that some TPT faculty are unable to tailor the materials they use for their classes or make improvements to their materials every semester, because they never know which topic they will be teaching until shortly before the semester starts. Since the preparation of materials would have to happen before they even know if they'll be teaching the class (or any class at all!), all that work would be both unaccommodated AND they might not even be able to put it to use if they end up not teaching the course. I have gotten around this by being financially able to accept a $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ load and by always being willing to teach the same intro-level course in-person (not everyone is willing to teach fully in-person and the course I teach is high demand, so it works for me).

Anne Kaintz Peterson

Normandale Community College