

Chair Fateh and Members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

I have been contingent faculty for 14 years. On a few occasions, I have had classes cancelled at the last minute, based on the Dean's protocol for when he/she would cancel classes and make changes before the semester started. On one occasion, all my classes were canceled, and I was not notified. I had to go in and request more classes, which worked out okay. On another occasion, I was not given a full class load, even though I am the most senior adjunct in the department, because others assumed I had a full class load and gave the open sections to other adjuncts. This "simple" work task is so much more than that--people's incomes and insurance coverage depend on credit load. On other occasions, classes were cancelled, and I was left with 1 credit. If I didn't have classes at another institution that was IFO, I would have had to live out of my car and give up my apartment because I would have run out of savings by the time the semester was over, and summer began. I never get classes in summer. I have usually had to work bartending jobs in which are seasonal, so I don't EVER get time off.

I have developed chronic health issues because of the over-working and ambient stress. When I usually have a full course load, it is difficult to impossible to have "other work lined up." I have done this and have had to give up other contracts. The unemployment protections need to be for every semester, including summer. Trades workers get unemployment even when they know they are getting laid off. Some don't take jobs and keep the unemployment so they can bank it and go back to work whenever they want while I have to struggle between semesters bartending or doing yard work for people, so I have consistent income and do not get behind. We, as adjuncts, always miss a pay period between fall and spring semesters. It is easy enough to plan, but it's also difficult to plan when the course load is not protected.

Administrations also put language in the contract letters to abstain from any responsibility for cancelled classes, noting that employment can be terminated at anytime. Well, if employment can be terminated at any time, why are we not eligible for unemployment benefits at any time if the rhetoric constantly tells us as contingent faculty--which makes up about 40% of the national college faculty workforce--that we are not valuable employees. We are constantly asked to serve on committees, which I do and continue to do, because I want to grow as an instructor and professional. On another occasion, when there were layoffs, I was given less classes and gave up my apartment because I knew that I would not receive the unemployment to help sustain me for a few months without draining my savings.

With insurance, I have had it accidentally cancelled by staff because there was miscommunication about balloon payments for summer. I am grateful and humbled that I have gone through the probationary period years ago and have maintained insurance. But, after ten or so years, shouldn't insurance not be an issue anymore? Shouldn't I be able to be locked in at some point? I have given up professional development opportunities, such as creating new classes and professional conferences, because I am not able to teach my specialty because of a lack of full-time hiring in which I would be in rotations to teach special topics courses. It is extremely frustrating to have been a long-time adjunct and respected colleague, that I am limited to teaching one general education class the majority of the time, except for when full-time faculty are on sabbaticals. This adjunct system does not allow for personal growth or a healthy quality of life. As humble and grateful as I am about how lucky I have been in the adjunct system, it needs to improve so there are greater protections, including seniority.

MSCF Contingent Faculty Member

(Testimony submitted anonymously due to the tenuous nature of their employment)