

Chair Meek, Vice Chair Wallan, and members of the committee,

My name is Joe Curran and I'm a community organizer with East County Rising, testifying tonight in support of House Bill 3144.

At East County Rising, we work to ensure elected officials are truly representative, responsive, and accountable to the people they serve.

We know that we need more representation, but right now there are many barriers that prevent BIPOC and low-income community members from holding elected office. One significant barrier is inadequate legislator pay.

While people of color make up a quarter of our state's population, they represent a far lower percentage of elected officials. If our state legislature truly values racial equity, it only makes sense to reduce a key barrier by supporting House Bill 3144 and promoting more representative leadership.

House Bill 3144, by tying legislature pay to a measure of household incomes that indicate how "average" Oregonians are doing, will help increase the accessibility of the state legislature to the communities that are truly the experts in our most pressing issues because of their lived experience.

In addition to reducing barriers for people of color and low income Oregonians to serve in public office, House Bill 3144 also will help address the issue of limited capacity. With under-resourced officials and staff, more well-resourced lobbyists and interest groups are able to exert undue power and influence. Addressing the issue of inadequate legislator pay will help restore trust in government and better set up the legislature to meet all of our communities' needs.

I urge you to join us in supporting House Bill 3144.

Thank you,  
Joe Curran  
Community Organizer  
East County Rising