



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support of SB 1566

February 3, 2022

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, and I'm the State Representative for House District 46, which covers Southeast Portland parts of East and NE Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1566, the Opportunity to Serve Act.

I ran for office because I believe that our democracy is stronger when our government represents the diverse communities it serves, from renters to fixed-income homeowners, from immigrant small business owners to working single parents juggling childcare responsibilities. Oregonians deserve to see legislators who understand their priorities because they live them every day and who will work hard to pass policies that improve their lives.

In my 2nd year as a legislator, I still feel both the honor and the weight of the responsibility to lead in this moment of multiple crises. But our current pay structure is inaccessible for many people who are all but shut out from our legislature. We are categorically screening out people who could capably do this work and enrich our state.

Our work in this legislature is strengthened when our lawmaking body has a fuller spectrum of experiences that can empathize with the experiences of a rural small farmer who is worried about their crop, or a parent's concerns for their child who is struggling to keep up in the classroom, or a caretaker of their elderly immigrant parents, trying to navigate the healthcare system.

SB 1566 modernizes our legislature by helping legislators work year round, because the issues and crises that we face today do not neatly conform into the few designated months we legislate in Salem. This bill will enable legislators to spend more time collaborating with stakeholders and to introduce more fully discussed and vetted policies. This, in turn, will allow us to do better, more efficient work in the limited session days that we're given.

SB 1566 also modernizes our legislature by reducing the potential conflicts of interest that emerge when legislators have to search for employment and income to supplement their meager wages. Nobody wants legislators to be weighing in on policies

that impact the very companies or interests that they are employed in or seeking employment in. The people of Oregon need to be assured that legislators are working for the people's interests, accountable to their constituents and the people of Oregon, no one else.

When legislators can earn a wage that exactly matches what the average Oregon worker is making, our legislature can truly be the People's House, coming up with policies that will help all our communities thrive.

I urge your support for SB 1566.