

Submitter: Lauren Fairshter

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
General Government

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5016

Co-chairs Gorsek and Smith and members of the committee,

My name is Lauren Fairshter and I am requesting that this biennium's legislative budget allow for two year-round staff per legislative office. As an Oregonian, access to my elected officials is highly important to me. I want to be able to trust that my views are being noted and my concerns are being addressed throughout the year. If I have an issue with a state agency, I want to know I can turn to my legislator's office for help. Additionally, I want to see well-researched, fully-baked policies being introduced at the beginning of session so that I and other constituents can meaningfully interact with the legislative process and know what is being proposed. And I understand that all of this can only happen if there are enough staff to do all of this work. In a climate where our federal legislature is failing us, it is paramount that our state legislature is as effective as possible.

In addition to this being beneficial for constituents, this is also a matter of equity. I have heard from several staff that have worked in the legislature and they are constantly demoralized and unable to hold steady income or a job to support themselves. How do we expect our legislative offices to serve constituents if staff members are constantly worried about what jobs they need to have lined up next so they can put food on the table? What folks are we leaving out of these positions because they can't afford to take a temporary job? It is unfair to expect high quality staff if none of the assistant positions are long enough to allow someone to keep paying their rent.

Please fund adequate year-round staffing in legislative offices to support effective, responsive, and efficient governance and public service.

Thank you,

Lauren Fairshter