

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 addition, this is a matter of equity. If temporary staff aren't able to pay their rent year round, then they are constantly trying to figure out what their next job needs to be. Or if they want to have a career in the legislature then they have to have the funds already to tie them over in the off season. What voices and people are we excluding from this jobs because they can't afford to waste their life or livelihood waiting for the next session? How can we expect them to support constituents or legislators properly when they aren't properly supported themselves?

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

Thank you,
Lauren Fairshter