

Submitter: Calli Ross

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5016

Chair Gorsek, Chair Smith and members of the committee:

My name is Calli Ross, and for the past four years, I have been advocating on behalf of children with disabilities across Oregon. In that time, I've worked closely with legislative offices, policy teams, and community stakeholders to advance meaningful legislation. I've seen firsthand how essential legislative staff are—not only to the function of the Capitol, but to the people of Oregon.

Let me be clear: these are not part-time roles. The demands on legislative offices don't end when the session gavels out. Constituents still need help navigating services. Policy development, budget analysis, and community engagement continue throughout the interim. Public input doesn't stop, and neither does the need for equitable access to the democratic process.

If we are truly committed to a government that is responsive, transparent, and accessible to all—especially to marginalized communities and those with disabilities—then we must provide year-round staffing support to make that a reality. The current structure creates bottlenecks, contributes to burnout, and limits the ability of offices to meaningfully engage with Oregonians.

Year-round staff aren't a luxury. They're a necessity for an accessible and functional legislature. Recognizing and embracing the vital work that legislative staffers do—day in and day out—is an investment in our democracy.

Thank you for your time, and I urge your support for year-round legislative staffing.  
Calli Ross