

Submitter: Will Gray

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5016

I write today in my individual capacity urging your support of HB 5016 and SB 1184.

As a legislative assistant with the office of Senator Prozanski, I have had the wonderful opportunity to serve the diverse constituency of Senate District 4 while also supporting the professional and efficient administration of the Senator's office. It was a distinct pleasure and honor to realize my goal, after two years of unpaid striving, of finally being hired on as a paid assistant. However, due to various constraints, I was only able to be brought on part-time. As a graduate student and parent, I have been able to make do with a part-time salary, but can not do so indefinitely. Indeed, as a hedge, I have sought, and been offered, a position in a Ph.D. program thousands of miles away from the state I love and now consider home.

This session has come with a potentially record-setting number of bills and the inherent challenges of trying to understand the myriad nuances and complexities of unprecedented federal actions that impact Oregon and its wonderful residents. All of this comes with the uncertainty of being a state employee in a time of extreme polarization. One of my first memories a few years ago, when first being brought on as an intern, was the necessity of signaling my understanding of the procedures for handling bomb threats. Now, the situation may be more dire. This may be especially true given my office's often public support for so-called "gun bills," as well as their mere presence on my member's primary committee.

Having the security of a full-time position throughout the year would enable me to not just stay in Oregon and support the office of my legislative member. Beyond allowing me to contribute to Oregon's vibrant economy, it would provide the office the capacity to fully meet an informed electorate where they're at. Much of the value I add to our office is often unseen, but it adds up. From constituent communications, including handling time-sensitive permitting needs and extremely sensitive constituent harms, to simply grabbing a forgotten water bottle, I help the office save time and ensure constituents retain some semblance of trust in our core democratic institutions at a time when people are gathering in the streets to communicate their lack of faith.

In the past, I have helped manage large events, helped draft courtesies on the fly an hour before a floor session, direct visitors through the capitol, and provided important feedback or analysis on bills. I have also been afforded the trust and privilege to act as a sort of acting Chief of Staff so that my boss could have a rare reprieve from a

record-setting deluge of bills. Having the capacity to retain me in my current position would be a win-win for everyone. I urge your support for this and SB 1184.