

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Megan Wai, and I am the Chief of Staff for the office of Senate District 10. I am writing today in my personal capacity to urge the inclusion of funding for year-round LA2 positions in the Legislature's budget.

Legislative staff face intense workloads—both during sessions and in the interims. The current system, which provides for LA2 positions only during session, creates serious capacity challenges for member offices and places immense stress on staff. While interims may once have been a slower time of year when staff could take things easy, this is no longer true. Interims are now periods when Chiefs take on intense constituent services and policy development workloads without the help of supportive staff.

In 2024, our legislative office fielded 188 constituent services cases. Of those, 164 occurred during the interim between the 2024 and 2025 legislative sessions, when our budget does not provide for an LA2. That is an average of 18 constituent services cases per month, many of which involve individuals with very acute or complex needs.

During this same period, my member served on 11 different task forces, work groups, and commissions related to her work as a State Senator, each of which requires staff capacity to track. My member also drafted 72 personal bills and 16 committee bills this interim, which, due to drafting deadlines, all had to be developed before we hired our LA2 in mid-November.

This is data from just one office, but I believe it is similar to the workloads that other offices experience during the interim. All of this amounts to an immense workload being place on one person, who is simultaneously absorbing the administrative and outreach work that is handled by supportive staff during session.

During the interim, at least two constituents reached out to me to express disappointment regarding slow responses to their emails, and I absolutely understand their frustration. While I try to maintain excellent customer service, some tasks can fall through the cracks when staff are overwhelmed.

Understaffing in legislative offices is bad for Oregonians and bad for staff. Please include adequate year-round staffing in HB 5016, to support effective, responsive, and efficient public service.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Wai". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first and last names clearly legible.