

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

My name is Selena Blick and I am currently a legislative assistant for House District 5, but I am testifying today in my personal capacity. I say currently because I have no idea how much longer I will be able to stay employed at the legislature under the current staffing structure. My colleagues asked me to testify today because I am one of the few legislative assistants who has managed to return to work here for more than one session. It is sad that this is an anomaly.

I started at the legislature in January of 2024 having lots of experience that translated to this work, but no experience in the legislature or even with campaigns. I took the job thinking that it would be a good stepping stone to something else, because what else could a six week job possibly be? Unfortunately, for my financial stability, I fell in love with this work and fought to find a way to come back. I managed to piece together some gig work and get on Medicaid during the interim to make ends meet. Then, at the end of August, I got a call asking me to immediately come work for a different office because their Chief of Staff was dealing with a family emergency and the inbox was completely underwater. Luckily I said yes because I later learned that I was the *only* person that HMO could recommend with the experience and availability to jump right in.

The nature of the legislature is that there is always going to be change and turnover among members and leadership, but this is all the more reason to ensure that we have consistent and stable staffing to maintain institutional knowledge and enable legislators and staff to do their best work for Oregonians. Having no flexibility for Chiefs to take time off during the interim is not sustainable. Using limited time and resources to interview, hire, onboard, and train new LAs every year is not efficient. Burdening Chiefs with scheduling and constituent work during the interim is not effective for good policy development. Instead, creating a stable staffing structure would benefit legislators *and* their constituents by enabling staff to show up for their district year after year with experience and time and compassion.

Thank you.

Selena Blick  
IBEW 89 Member