

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on HB 5016. My name is Haley, and I'm a legislative aide. When the session ends in June, I, like many of my colleagues, will be out of a job - not because our work is finished, but because our positions end with sine die.

This is my first session in the Legislature. Before this, I spent seven years in education, first as a paraeducator and then as a fourth-grade teacher. I came to the Capitol to continue serving the public and to bring a perspective shaped by working with families and children from all walks of life. I also came to learn and grow, to be part of policy development from beginning to end. But like many session-only staffers, I'll miss months of critical work during the interim; work I want to do, but simply can't afford to do without pay. That means I lose momentum, and so does my office.

Legislative aides are doing more than ever. This session saw over 3,300 bills, and constituent casework has nearly doubled over the past decade. And as a citizen legislature, our lawmakers rely on staff to carry forward policy development and constituent service, especially in the interim. With bill limits on the horizon, each proposal will likely be more complex, requiring more collaboration, research, and outreach. That work won't go away in the off-season - if anything, it will increase. And that responsibility will fall largely to staff.

It's possible that the state will pay for our time either way: through continued employment or through unemployment and public health insurance. But only one of those choices strengthens the Legislature and serves the public. Without consistent staff, constituent needs go unmet, institutional knowledge is lost, and policy development suffers.

We're asking for the stability to do our jobs well. We want to grow in these roles, build strong offices, and serve the people of Oregon with the care they deserve - year round.

This work is a privilege. I'm proud to do it. And I hope I'll be able to continue.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to work with leadership to adequately staff offices so we can best support Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Haley Sawyer