

Submitter: Cassie Wilson

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5016

I strongly support full funding for year round legislative assistants.

I served as a Legislative Assistant during the 2024 short session. It was a transformative experience for me, and I wanted nothing more than to be able to keep serving Oregon in this capacity. Unfortunately, due to budget limitations, it was only a temporary position. I learned so much in those few months, but when session ended I couldn't wait around for there to be an opening in the legislature. I wanted to stay and work full time, but there were no openings, and I knew the only way to have job security in the legislature would be as a Chief of Staff. How is one supposed to gain the knowledge and experience of being a Chief of Staff when there are no entry level jobs during the interim? Most policy development happens before session starts, yet there is no sustainably funded way for Legislative Assistants to gain that experience. A majority of the LAs who worked the same session as me went on to do completely different jobs, allowing any institutional knowledge gained to leave the building. While the knowledge I learned has been helpful in the work I do now, it's a shame for the sake of the legislature that there are so few long term staff in the building.

Now as a public policy advocate, I also see the value in having more year-round staff to be involved in policy development conversations. For the many legislators who have to hold full time jobs or be full time parents outside of session, they rely heavily on their staff to develop policy concepts in the interim. For better community engagement, offices need the staff capacity to connect with communities across the state.

Please full staff legislator offices.