

My name is Jackson Pahl, and I serve as a Chief of Staff in the Oregon House of Representatives, but I submit this testimony in my personal capacity. I am new to the Capitol, but in the short time I've been here, one thing has become immediately clear: the Legislature is only as strong as the people who support it, and right now, we're asking too few people to do too much, for too little, with too much uncertainty.

I am fortunate to be one of the permanent staffers, but my colleague—who is no less essential to the functioning of our office—will be let go at the end of the session due to lack of year-round funding. This is not only unfair to them as a professional, but deeply short-sighted for the institution.

The impact is not abstract. Session-only staffing means:

- Constituent services suffer, often at the very moment when the need is highest—after bills pass, when new systems are confusing, and agencies are adjusting.
- Institutional knowledge is lost, as talented staff cycle in and out, taking their expertise and relationships with them.
- Retention becomes impossible, except at the chief level, because the structure guarantees instability for everyone else.
- Chiefs are forced to triage, juggling policy development, communications, constituent casework, scheduling, office management, and more—often alone during the interim.

We ask our offices to help access unemployment benefits, navigate health systems, appeal agency decisions, and much more. These are complex, intensive, and time-sensitive efforts. And we know that when experienced, trusted staff are in place, we do this work better and we do this work faster.

I have benefitted enormously from the wisdom and generosity of seasoned staffers who've helped me learn to navigate this place. But many of them will be shown the door at the end of session, not because they aren't needed, but because we haven't built a system that knows how to value them properly. We have got to do better, for the staff, for the electeds, and most of all, for the people we serve.

I know this request predates me considerably. It's been raised for years and across multiple bargaining cycles. What is new is the urgency. Without change, we will continue to hollow out the institution we are all trying to strengthen.

I urge you to support a long-term funding solution for year-round staffing, because it is foundational to good governance, fair labor practices, and the promise of a responsive, professional Legislature.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jackson Pahl