

April 30, 2025

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair Smith, and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government,

My name is Cameron Quackenbush, and while I currently serve as a Legislative Assistant (LA 2) to Senator Lew Frederick, I submit this testimony in my personal capacity. I write to provide my testimony in favor of sustainable, year-round funding for LA 2 staff.

I first joined Senator Frederick's team during my second year of law school as an intern for the 2023 legislative session. I returned in the same role for the 2024 session and have served as Senator Frederick's LA 2 since. The work of an LA 2 is monotonous at times, routine, but critically important to the functioning of a legislative office. As an LA 2, I answer the office phones and reply to voice messages; sort the main email inbox; help constituents navigate governmental systems and access services; reply to policy questions and requests; and assure that our team remains informed and updated. While this work varies in its complexity, and no two days are the same, I can attest that it is time intensive work. With hundreds of emails a day—before even discussing physical mail and voice mail—the job of an LA 2 involves constant triage and attention. On many days, even with constant attention to the inbox from 8 am through 5 pm, there is simply too much input for even a dedicated full time staffer to handle.

Though the work of a LA 2 is not glamorous, it is critical to the functioning of a legislative office because it simply needs to be done. If not for LA 2 staff, all this aforementioned work would fall upon member's chiefs of staff—who have other critical work to do, including: reading and reviewing legislation; talking with stake holders; crafting legislative plans and goals; advising their members; and managing the flow of the entire office. As you heard in the testimony from my chief of staff, Nathan Soltz, the need for a year-round LA 2 has been so dire that he has elected to use what little of the office budget that remains to keep me on staff to manage the LA 2 work. Although this decision leaves our office with no extra funds, it is a decision that allows our office to function through the interim and keep our chief of staff available to do the work needed of him by the Senator.

With an exponentially increasing workload, this system of staffing is causing burn out for chiefs of staff and leaving LA 2 staff like myself with no option but to look for work elsewhere. While I love the work that I do for Senator Frederick, I have bills that I must figure out how to pay. And as I make this decision, it leaves my chief of staff in the position of trying to decide whether to absorb all my work or find and train a new part time LA 2 for the interim. This is a loss of institutional memory and capacity, while all the while over burdening remaining staff with a workload that can barely be carried by two staffers. While legislative offices do a high volume of wonderful work, the majority of this work would not be possible without a knowledgeable staff to keep the train on the tracks. I urge you to vote in favor of a successful legislature, please vote to provide each legislative office with sustainable, year-round funding for a second LA position. Thank you.