

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

My name is Linh Oliver, and I have the privilege of concurrently serving as an intern for two members of the Oregon House of Representatives. I am writing in my own capacity to express strong support for increasing legislative budgets to allow for two full-time staff, including one full-time year round LA2.

I am obviously not the first to lament the discouraging instability of legislative staff positions, nor will I be the last. As a recent college graduate with no shortage of student debt, the short-term nature and inherent uncertainty of this work nearly drove me away from accepting my initial internship offer. The only way I could justify it for myself was by accepting two positions simultaneously, in order to both increase my pay *and* my likelihood of finding work after this session ends.

In addition, both of my offices experienced degrees of churn early on in session. Were it not for the accumulated expertise and cohesion of both staff teams, I am sure our respective circumstances would have turned out significantly worse than they have. That reality lends itself to the point many of my fellow staffers have already made.

Simply put, we need more than bodies shuffling in and out of positions every session — the success of the legislature and the service to our constituents depends on the work of enduring, experienced staff. It takes time and consistency to learn the inner workings of the legislature, to develop meaningful rapport with your district, to know your legislator's mind and voice better than your own. It is costly and illogical to let these talented staffers slip through the cracks all because they can't rely on stable employment in the capitol.

I've devoted most of my life to serving my communities as best I can, through any avenues I can access — this internship was a dream come true for me. I love my job, I love both my offices, I love Oregon. But as things stand, I'm not sure I'll ever be able to justify returning to the capitol after this session. It's a sobering thought, and it saddens me: on my own behalf, for the countless others who have had to make the same difficult decision to walk away, and for those left behind in the legislature that have had to start the process of rebuilding all over again each session.

It's a privilege to serve Oregon and all those who reside here. We need the resources to do that to the best of our ability; this is not a luxury, it's a necessity. I appreciate your consideration, and respectfully urge you to include adequate year-round staffing in HB 5016.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linh Oliver".