

May 1, 2025

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

On behalf of the undersigned employees of the legislative assembly, we respectfully request that you consider including in HB 5016 solutions that would provide adequate staffing for legislative offices in order to support the year-round demands of legislative work. This proposal has support from Democratic and Republican staffers alike, Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Assistants, interns, and legislators. It is an issue that impacts all legislative offices in the building and one that has been growing as staff workloads continue to increase with no commensurate increase in staffing.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the volume and acuity of constituent services calls have increased dramatically as Oregonians saw they could turn to the Legislature for help. Average yearly constituent casework post-COVID has doubled relative to the pre-COVID average and has not returned to pre-COVID workload. Oregonians expect and deserve timely responses when they need help and, as staff, we want to provide that help in a meaningful way.

In the interim and short session, when many offices are forced to cut staff, the Chief of Staff is responsible for responding and working with those constituents, along with scheduling, policy development, district events, and myriad other tasks. Chiefs of Staff have shared stories of vacations where they are still taking phone calls and answering emails, and burnout that leads to hospitalizations from work stress.

As legislators who have all been here longer than one term, you have undoubtedly experienced the high staff turnover. After every long session, we lose highly qualified and talented Legislative Assistants when they opt for permanent jobs that offer longer-term stability. This is a losing proposition all around - for the Chief, the Legislative Assistant, your constituents, and you, as someone managing an office and training new staff.

This session saw a record-breaking number of bills introduced. This increase in workload puts an increased strain on the whole legislative system, without any complementary increase in staffing for legislative offices. Fewer resources for bill development means more work for committee staff, Legislative Counsel, and legislators as bills regularly need to be amended during session. It also means more decisions are delegated to state agencies that implement the bills. When this happens, the implementation is more likely to deviate from the legislative intent. Two year-round staff per legislative office would enable interim bill development to be more comprehensive, leading to more effective policies for all Oregonians.

We know the increase in workload is felt by legislators as well. While we are technically a citizen legislature, it is a myth that anyone in this building does this job part-time. Even with the workload required by this job, many of you and your colleagues also hold down other jobs during the interim and even during session. Increased staffing is one way legislators who work other jobs can better balance their legislative duties and other responsibilities.

As we face an unknown economic future, we understand that increased funding is a challenging ask, but if social and economic turbulence is in our future, we also know this will likely increase

our workload, if the past is any indication. If Oregonians lose jobs, face increased costs, or just general uncertainty, they will reach out to your offices more, looking for help and answers. Being able to support those constituents during these times is more important than ever.

Representatives and Senators, most of us working in the building are here because we love doing this work. We work in a wonky and unique world, and our passion keeps us showing up, day after day, session after session. We are here because we want to serve Oregon and strive to make Oregonians' lives better every day. We don't ask for public recognition or accolades. In fact, for many of us, making such a public appeal is completely out of our comfort zone. We simply want more support to be able to do our jobs to the best of our ability.

We greatly appreciate your time and consideration of this proposal while maintaining a busy committee with weighty decisions. We hope that solutions to staff and legislator workload will be a serious part of the conversation as HB 5016 moves forward.

Thank you,

Kathryn Duvall, LA3, Environmental Caucus	Alex Lopez, LA2, Senator McLane
Selena Blick, LA2, Rep. Marsh	Ryan Moore, LA4, Rep. Gamba
Andrew Hull, LA2, Rep. Andersen	Christopher McMorran, LA4, Sen. Reynolds
Haley Sawyer, LA2, Rep. Kropf	Jessie Kochaver, LA2, Rep. Gamba
Megan Wai, LA4, Sen. Patterson	Antonio Martinez, LA2, Sen. Patterson
Cameron Quackenbush, LA2, Sen. Frederick	Spencer Trumm, LA2, Rep. Hudson
Aaron Brown, LA2, Senator Pham	Caleb Hayes, LA4, Rep. Hudson
Collin Ledford, LA2, Rep. Tran	Harlan Thomajan, Intern, Rep. Hudson
Will Worth, LA4, Rep. Walters	Amy Dudley, LA3, Sen. Pham
Sarah Arbuckle, LA4, Rep. H Nguyen	Spencer Rosenau, LA2
Daniel Moltke, LA4, Rep. Hartman	Jason Hitzert, LA4, Sen. Gorsek
Joseph Santos-Lyon, LA3, Sen. Pham	Andrew Matto, LA2, Sen. Reynolds
Sheridan Corrie, LA, Rep. Helm	Natalie Lerner, Intern, Sen. Pham
Renée Perry, LA4, Rep. Boshart Davis	Mie Kumin, LA3, Rep. Isadore
Dru Draper, LA, Rep. Boshart Davis	AmyBeth Altenhofen, LA4, Rep. Nelson
Ben Schimmoller, LA 3, Rep. Scharf	Stacy Clark, LA4, Rep. Owens
	Harmony Burright, LA3, Water Caucus

Hibah Hammad, LA 3, Sen. Gelser Blouin

Jessica Snook, LA 4, Rep. Elmer

Tanner Elliott, LA 3, Sen. Brock Smith

Linh Oliver, Intern, Reps. Pham & H Nguyen

Max Herrera, Intern, Rep. Nelson

Sara Kim, LA4, Rep. Pham

Shelia Megson, LA4, Sen. Brock Smith

Jackson Pahl, LA4, Rep. Isadore

Kenzy Seifert, LA4, Rep. Kropf

Zeke Adler, LA3, Rep. Nelson

Emily Dorn, Intern, Rep Muñoz

JoriLynn Messner, LA4, Rep Watanabe

Sabrina Gross, LA2, Rep. Fragala

Jennifer Ranstrom, LA 4, Rep. Evans

Olivia Mannon, LA 4, Rep. Nathanson

Grace Corcoran, LA 2, Rep. Finger McDonald

Myra Flores, LA4, Sen. Broadman

Jade Brandow, Intern, Sen. Woods

Adam MacDonald-Factor, LA2, Sen.
Broadman

Woodrow Moore, LA2, Rep. Valderrama

Alex Fallman, LA4, Rep. Nosse

Theresa Mai, BIPOC Caucus

Ramiro Navarro Jr, Veterans Caucus

Greg Mintz, LA4, Rep. Helm

Aaron Lewis, LA 4, Sen. Jama

McKenzie Worthington, LA3, Sen. Wagner

Sam Evans, LA 4, Rep. Edwards

Ross Regev, LA 2, Rep. Watanabe

Luke Harkins, LA4, Rep. Gomberg

Celine Swenson Harris, LA4, Rep. Fragala

Nikolas Ruiz Anderson LA 4, Rep. Helfrich

Andrew Hickerson, LA 4, Rep. Lively

Ian Curtis, LA 2, Rep. Gomberg

Nathan Soltz, LA 4, Sen. Frederick

Barrett Johnson, LA 4, Rep. Grayber

Miles Palacios, LA 4, Sen. Campos

Zack Surmacz, LA 3, Rep. Chaichi

Gianluca Scoppa, LA 2, Rep. Lively

Devin Mullins, LA 3, Rep. Bowman

Inna Levin, LA 4, Rep Tran

Celeste Baird, LA 1, Rep. Tran

Tommy Jarvis, LA 1, Rep. Tran

LaTonya Meyer LA 4, Sen. Woods

Abigail Kirshy, LA 4, Rep. Valderrama

Julia Salomone, LA 2, Rep. Neron

Linda Heimdahl, LA4, Sen. Thatcher