

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

My name is Collin Ledford, and I serve as a Legislative Aide (LA2) to Representative Thủy Trần of House District 45. I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity, on my own time, and not on behalf of Rep. Trần or her office.

The 2025 Long Session marks my second as an LA2, following my work during the 2024 Short Session and my continued part-time service throughout the spring, summer, and fall of that year. I love this work deeply. It is fulfilling, meaningful, and a true honor to serve both the people of Oregon and the Representative who represents me.

Before joining the Legislature, I served as a field director on state legislative campaigns during the 2022 and 2024 election cycles. I also worked in the private sector as an area manager for a large logistics and e-commerce company, where I oversaw warehouse operations and led teams of up to 150 associates per shift.

Among other responsibilities, I was tasked with training and developing team members in roles similar to that of floor leads—employees who served as the bridge between frontline associates and management. It often took months to bring these individuals up to speed. During my tenure, I trained and supervised six different floor leads, with as many as three reporting to me at once. I can't imagine having them only part of the year and continually reinvesting time and resources into hiring and onboarding replacements. That kind of turnover would have severely impacted operational efficiency and diminished the experience for both workers and customers. Recognizing this, the company made the strategic decision throughout the 2010s to professionalize the floor lead role and convert it into a permanent position—ensuring consistent support for associates, better outcomes for customers, and greater sustainability for managers.

That same logic applies here in the Oregon State Legislature. LA2s are the equivalent of those essential “bridge” roles—connecting constituents to their government, translating policy into action, and supporting legislators in everything from constituent services to committee preparation, community engagement, and bill tracking. Yet under the current staffing model, these positions are temporary, with most LA2s hired only for the duration of session. This creates significant gaps in continuity, institutional knowledge, and service delivery. It also shifts ongoing responsibilities—like scheduling, town halls, social media, and administrative support—onto the permanent LA4s in each office, reducing the time they can dedicate to policy development, stakeholder engagement, and committee work.

This challenge is compounded by the structure of the Legislature itself. Oregon's legislative body is designed to be a citizen legislature—one in which lawmakers are not full-time politicians, but working professionals from all walks of life. Many legislators hold outside employment during the interim in order to make ends meet, and adequate staffing is what makes that model viable. With consistent, year-round staff support, legislators are better able to work on their farms, run their clinics, manage their small businesses, or serve in whatever professional capacity they hold. For swing-district members especially, campaign responsibilities can also significantly reduce the time they are able to dedicate to legislative work. As someone who has worked on campaigns for members in competitive districts, I've seen firsthand how intense and all-consuming those efforts can be. In both cases—whether due to employment or electoral demands—more and more responsibilities fall on the solo LA4s who remain in the office year-round. Without additional staff capacity, these aides are stretched thin, limiting the ability of offices to maintain constituent services, advance policy goals, and stay connected to the communities they represent.

Each time an LA2 is hired anew for session, valuable weeks are lost to onboarding and training. Relationships with constituents, stakeholders, and agency staff must be rebuilt from scratch. Important casework, policy follow-up, and district outreach often stall between sessions—not because the work disappears, but because the staff to do it does. This stop-and-start structure is inefficient, unsustainable, and ultimately a disservice to the very communities we are here to represent.

Just as private-sector organizations invest in consistent, skilled staff to ensure long-term effectiveness, the Legislature should do the same. Year-round LA2 positions would reduce turnover, improve government responsiveness, and ensure public servants are set up to serve the public well.

I understand that the proposed investment—approximately \$15 million—is a significant fiscal ask, especially in what is shaping up to be a challenging budget cycle. But this is not just a line item; it is an investment in the professionalization, stability, and quality of life within the Oregon Legislature. Year-round LA2 positions would enhance the capacity of every legislative office, reduce burnout, and create a healthier, more functional institution that better serves Oregonians. In the long term, this investment will pay dividends in efficiency, continuity, and the caliber of public service we are able to deliver.

I love my job, and I love the work we do in the Legislature. For many years, this has been my dream job. It is personally fulfilling and professionally meaningful in ways few other roles could ever be. I left a higher-paying management position in the private sector because I believed so strongly in this work—because public service, especially in the Oregon Legislature, matters deeply to me. But the uncertainty that comes with needing to find new employment after Sine Die is daunting. Like many LA2s, I'm faced with the difficult reality that, despite my passion and commitment, this session will likely be my last. Without a pathway to stable, year-round employment, it becomes nearly impossible to sustain a career in this field—even for those of us who are all-in.

It is my sincere hope that this committee—and the Co-Chairs of Ways and Means—will seize this opportunity to invest in the long-term health, professionalism, and effectiveness of the Oregon Legislature by funding year-round LA2 positions. The future of this institution, and the quality of service we provide to Oregonians, depends on it.

Thank you,

Collin J. Ledford