



**OREGON STATE SENATE**  
**900 COURT STREET ST NE**  
**SALEM, OREGON 97301**

June 25, 2025

Secretary of the Senate

Vote Explanation: HB 5016 A – Legislative Branch Budget

I voted yes on this bill, but I need to put down a marker. I have serious concerns with HB 5016 and the legislature's budget. In particular, staffing levels in this building. We hear every session about the need for more staff in all sorts of agencies and often, we are receptive to those needs. But as we continue to increase staffing in the executive branch, our own staffing hasn't progressed. I introduced SB 1184 this session to address this, allocating a second permanent legislative aide to each office. It was sponsored by 22 members from both chambers and both parties. And I was among about a dozen members who testified on HB 5016 when it had its hearing in the General Government Subcommittee about the need for increased staffing.

I understand that there is going to be a study on this topic in the interim, but I need to say very clearly that we do not need a study to know that the current staffing structure of legislative offices is not sustainable. This is not the same workload that this building had almost 50 years ago when I started covering the legislature as a new reporter, and it's not even the same that it was 16 years ago when I joined this body. My constituents are shocked, and frankly upset, whenever they learn that we only get a single permanent staff member. I can't blame them. It doesn't make for good constituent services, and it doesn't make for good governance.

I do appreciate that commissioning this study and looking at this issue is at least recognition of the problem. But whatever comes out of the study, I am taking what I have heard as a commitment that this issue will be addressed next year in the short session. While I strongly believe that the second permanent LA is the best solution, it may not be the only one. And what I do hope we get in the study is an examination of our whole staffing structure. For instance, our budgets effectively penalize offices that have more senior staff – thereby penalizing the staff for being more senior too. As staff receive a well-deserved pay raise every year they work here, that means that there is less room in our budgets to find resources for even a part-time staff in the interim, not to mention for professional development, conferences, or even just office supplies. As a result, more experienced staff who are more able to support us in high-level policy work are less able to do so because they have to pick up all of the casework, scheduling, and so on that a second aide would ordinarily do.

I understand the concern about marketing this to the public, but I genuinely believe that our constituents can understand that to do the work they expect us to do – and that we were all elected to do – we can't just rely on a single individual to help us out for 18 out of every 24 months. And yes, I know that other states' legislatures are worse off. I can't speak to their structures, but that tells me that they should probably look at this too.

While HB 5016 includes investments in our nonpartisan professional staff, our legislative aides are professional staff too, and we need to be investing in them. This isn't just about how members may have built their offices based on current budgets, or how each individual office may have unique needs. This is about the long-term success of the legislative branch, our ability to do our work, and building a structure that is equitable, sustainable, and fair.

Truly, I look forward to continuing these conversations, but even more so, I look forward to this being the last interim where we have to deal with this concern.