



Date: February 3rd, 2022
To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Increasing Legislator Compensation 2022, SB 1566

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Public Policy with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1566. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

Opportunities to meaningfully engage as legislators can be restrictive for people with a lower income, significant financial barriers, or do not have job flexibility to work while participating in the legislative process. Legislative pay is an equity issue, legislative pay functions as a historic barrier for candidates who are young, do not have access to wealth, and are members of the BIPOC community. Oregon's legislature should reflect the people they serve however, retirees and wealthy individuals are more likely to pursue office.

Oregonian legislators are paid a salary of \$31,200. To reduce this financial barrier, the Oregon legislator pay should be tied to the occupational employment and wages of their fellow Oregonians. Therefore, as constituent income rises and falls, so would the legislators' wages. In 2021, the mean occupational employment and wage estimate for Oregonians was approximately \$58,000. According to the bi-partisan group National Conference of State Legislatures, Oregon has a hybrid legislature, meaning that legislators are not considered full-time employees. Although many current legislators would like to focus on legislative priorities year-round it is not always financially possible, they must decide to between working to maintain their livelihood or serving their fellow Oregonians.

This is of personally interest to me. As a native Oregonian and Black woman who has spent close to twenty years in politics and social justice movement work, when I returned from my time in Washington D.C., I looked to how I could utilize my skillsets and passion for other fellow Oregonians. I immediately thought of public service. I grew up in a household where service to others and one's community was paramount, and I wanted my work to reflect those values. In researching the salary of our elected officials, I was shocked and dismayed to see just how much they truly made, and it felt like one more way that the system writ large has been designed to keep folks who look like me out. It's time for that to change because Oregon is changing. If we are committed to racial and social justice in this state, then we have to be prepared to fund those changes. Increasing legislator salary is one place to start.

Passing SB 1566 would allow Oregonians who were financially disenfranchised to take part in the legislative process, as the bill would give them a livable wage while they are serving Oregon. Future legislative leaders are counting on you to pass this bill.



Urban League
of Portland

Empowering Communities. Changing Lives.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Parrish Taylor

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