



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

February 3, 2022

Senate Rules Committee
RE: Support for SB 1566

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Knopp and Members of the Senate Rules Committee,

My name is Courtney Helstein, I am the Political Director of Family Forward Oregon. Our organization is committed to advancing policies that support mothers, caregivers, and families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. We strongly support SB 1566 this session, which would establish an annual salary for the members of the Legislative Assembly set at the average occupational employment and wage estimate for Oregon.

Historically, Oregon's Legislature has been whiter, wealthier, and older than Oregon's general population. While representation has improved in the last couple years, Oregonians who are young, low-income, BIPOC, and parents/caregivers still struggle with access and resources to run for office. The current low salary of legislators also discourages these populations to even think about running in the first place.

Raising the salaries of state legislators would help eliminate the need to have additional sources of income and provide better opportunities for people who are interested in running, but lack the resources to do so. In addition, the higher salary provided by the bill also recognizes the distance of certain legislative districts from the Capitol and additional travel considerations for individuals from rural areas, hopefully making the possibility of public service a practical goal for more rural Oregonians.

SB 1566 also includes an additional monthly allowance of \$1,000 for lawmakers who have a child or dependent under 13 years old. In our work with mothers, families and caregivers over the years, reliable access to high-quality, affordable child care has emerged over and over as one of the most pressing issues facing families all over our state. This has only been exacerbated during the COVID

pandemic, where it has become clearer than ever that child care is essential to family economic security. Adding a child care stipend would open the possibility of public service in the Legislature for many more people with young children, bringing valuable lived experience to this Capitol.

Family Forward supports the new amendment which would allow lawmakers with disabilities to access additional stipends to accommodate their workplace needs. Raising the annual salary for the Oregon lawmakers and providing additional stipends for child care and disabilities is an opportunity to create a more equitable Legislature for all.

Currently, only four states (California, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania) have full-time legislatures and receive adequate compensation and staffing to allow lawmakers to focus solely on their legislative duties.¹ It is time for Oregon to follow suit, and allow lawmakers to make a living without requiring a second source of income.

By increasing legislative pay, we will allow for more voices to be represented at the Legislature to accurately reflect our communities and state.

We urge your “YES” vote on SB 1566.

Sincerely,

Courtney Helstein
Political Director
Family Forward Oregon

¹ <https://newamericanleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/State-of-Pay-New-American-Leaders.pdf>

