



February 3, 2022

Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

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

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you in favor of SB 1566, the Opportunity to Serve Act. My name is Loren Naldoza, and I have the privilege of writing to you on behalf of the Oregon Economic Justice Roundtable.

The Oregon Economic Justice Roundtable (OEJR) is a shared table of advocates, non-profit organizations and funders, working to advance collective, sustained action for racial and economic justice. We believe we need to create an environment and systems of abundance by and for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and all communities of color so that all Oregonians can live beyond the basics of safety and security, and into the freedom to actualize dreams, and communities have the power to control their own financial and economic destiny.

SB 1566 addresses a serious equity issue associated with public service in the Oregon State Legislature, specifically that the opportunity to serve is financially out of reach for individuals who otherwise would make excellent representatives and senators. For many individuals interested in serving, earning a compensation of \$31,200 per year turns many away from the prospect of serving, because service would likely result significant financial sacrifice to meet the demands of session and interim work. For communities of color who have experienced generational wealth stripping, the opportunity to serve in the Legislature is even more cost prohibitive.

For members who currently undertake the honor of serving their districts, undoubtedly, financial constraints make service more difficult, and a full-time job for many helps to address monthly expenses and to continue to serve without encountering future financial difficulties. Unfortunately, depending on the source of income or industry, legislators often have to grapple with conflicts of interest as they are generally required to cast votes even if such a vote would affect their industry, or their other income streams.

SB 1566 makes a modest and sustainable proposal of raising legislator pay in reference to national income data, specifically the annual occupational mean wage estimate for Oregon as determined for the prior calendar year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). According to recent BLS data for 2020, such an amount of compensation would be roughly \$58,000. A member who has a child or dependent under 13 years of age would receive an additional allowance of \$1,000 per month, which is a key provision in addressing gender equity by helping future legislators mitigate the high cost of childcare.

Oregon is home to many talented BIPOC community leaders who have enormous potential in making valuable contributions to our state through public service. Unfortunately, we must also understand that systemic barriers to public service exist, which adversely affect these same community leaders from a

securing a seat on the House or Senate floor. The only way for the Legislature to address its serious issues in its lack of diversity and its barriers that keep people of color away from positions of considerable power is to compensate its members at a rate above the poverty line.

The Oregon Economic Justice Roundtable urges your support of SB 1566.

Thank you,

Loren Naldoza
Legislative & Communications Manager
Neighborhood Partnerships