



## Service Employees International Union Local 503

*72,000 public services workers, care providers, and non-profit employees in Oregon.*

**To: Senate Committee on Rules**

**On: February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022**

**Re: Senate Bill 1566**

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the committee,

My name is David Ramos, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of SEIU Local 503 – a labor union representing more than 72,000 public sector workers and care providers across the state of Oregon – in support of SB 1566, which would establish an annual compensation for members of the Legislative Assembly at a rate equal to the average occupational employment and wage estimate for our state.

At the core of our union’s work is an unwavering commitment to uplift and empower our members to become leaders – in the workplace, at our union, and within their communities. We believe that our governmental bodies should be reflective of the people they serve, and know that lived experience with the many, complex issues Oregonians face every single day can serve as an invaluable asset to bringing forth pragmatic solutions to these issues via legislative policymaking. We also believe that the opportunity to be public servants is one that should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances.

All too often, however, this is not the case. Oregonians with this lived, intersectional experience simply do not have the privileges or means necessary to run for or serve in a legislative office representing their community. In fact, one of the most common things we hear from our members who are interested in running for public office is that they cannot bear the financial strain of doing so.

Working people, people of color, women all have been historically excluded and underrepresented from elected offices at all levels of government. When you consider both the current rate at which legislators are compensated *and* the reality that serving as a member of Oregon’s legislative assembly is very challenging and time-consuming, it’s no wonder that the current system privileges those who can afford it.

By establishing an annual compensation rate that is equal to the average occupational employment and wage estimate for Oregon, we can pave the way for a more representative democracy – making the prospect of running for and serving in elected office one that is attainable to everyday, working Oregonians with a fierce devotion to serving our communities – without requiring them to experience financial hardship in the name of public service. It’s time to compensate our state’s legislators meaningfully and sustainably. We urge you to vote “YES” on SB 1566.

Sincerely,

David Ramos  
Policy & Political Strategist  
SEIU Local 503, OPEU