

Co-Chairs Patterson and Smith, and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government,

My name is Desi Nicodemus I am currently serving as a Milwaukie City Councilor and I am writing in support of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions Office for more funding and support.

The State has a responsibility to repair damage to our communities by properly funding efforts to include and encourage participation for those who were historically excluded because of systemic oppression and discrimination. This is necessary to address the inequalities that have resulted from past injustices and to create a more just and equitable society. By investing in programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, the State can help ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the resources and opportunities available in our society. This not only benefits those who have been historically excluded, but also benefits society as a whole by promoting greater understanding, collaboration, and innovation.

The Commissions are typically established to provide a platform for members to provide feedback and guidance on various issues that affect them. Voluntary advisory boards are often formed to support these commissions. However, in order for these commissions to be effective in engaging with the community, proper staffing is necessary to support these advisory boards. Without sufficient staffing, these advisory boards may not be able to function effectively. For example, they may struggle to organize and facilitate meetings, collect and analyze feedback, and communicate their recommendations to the appropriate decision-makers. This can result in a lack of engagement and input from the community, which can limit the effectiveness of the commission's work.

In contrast, with adequate staffing, these advisory boards can more effectively engage with the community and provide valuable insights and recommendations to decision-makers. Staff members can help to facilitate communication and organization, provide expertise on relevant issues, and ensure that community feedback is incorporated into decision-making processes. This can lead to more effective policy and better outcomes for the community.

There are many complex and diverse issues that affect our communities, and addressing them requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account the unique

perspectives and needs of different communities. Therefore, in order to provide effective advice to the Governor and Legislature, dedicated staff are necessary for each commission.

These dedicated staff members can help to research and analyze issues, facilitate meetings and public forums, and assist with the drafting of reports and recommendations. By having staff members who are knowledgeable about the specific issues that each commission is tasked with addressing, the commission can provide more informed and thorough advice.

Additionally, it's important to recognize that each commission is independent and has its own unique set of responsibilities and issues to address. Lumping them together can overlook the unique perspectives and needs of each community and could result in less effective and less targeted advice.

Therefore, it's important that each commission has dedicated staff members who can provide the necessary support and expertise to effectively address the issues facing their respective communities. This can ultimately lead to better outcomes and more equitable policies for all.

Effective work often requires resources and staffing. This is especially the case for our Commissioners, who represent historically excluded populations and do not have the network pipeline that others in these positions generally do. We need to support our volunteer commissioners because volunteers may not have the necessary expertise, experience, or time to fully carry out their roles and responsibilities without support. Resources such as training, technology, and administrative support can help volunteers understand their roles and perform their duties more effectively. Staffing can also provide important support in areas such as recruitment, orientation, supervision, and evaluation of volunteers. Without adequate resources and staffing, volunteer commissioners may not be able to fulfill their duties effectively, which can compromise the quality of their work and the success of the organization they serve.

Centering equity means making equity the primary focus and priority. If we want to achieve equity, it is not enough to simply acknowledge and address historical or systemic inequalities; we must also ensure that individuals and communities have access to the necessary resources to achieve equity. Without equity in resources such as education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities, it is difficult to level the playing field and create an equitable society. Therefore, equity in resources is a key component of centering equity.

Commissions are often set up for failure because they are typically tasked with addressing complex and challenging issues that require significant resources, expertise, and time to address effectively. However, they are often given limited resources and

staffing, making it difficult for them to fulfill their mandates successfully. As a result, they may struggle to gather and analyze information, consult with stakeholders, or make recommendations that are well-informed and widely accepted. This can lead to frustration and disillusionment among commission members, as well as the public, who may perceive the commission's efforts as inadequate or ineffective. Ultimately, to avoid setting commissions up for failure, it is essential to provide them with the resources, expertise, and support they need to carry out their work successfully.

Two staff members per commission may be necessary to ensure that the work is completed in a timely and effective manner. Depending on the specific needs of each commission, it may be necessary to have additional staff members beyond these guidelines. Ultimately, the number of staff will depend on the unique needs and circumstances of each commission.

I urge the members of the committee to support the passage of HB 5001.

Thank you for your consideration,
Desi Nicodemus