



State of New Mexico  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Santa Fe

January 25, 2024

The Honorable Nathan Small  
Chair  
House Appropriations and Finance Committee  
State Capitol, Room 304  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Mr. Chairman:

During the last interim, the Legislative Counsel Service commissioned a study to develop various options as to how best to provide year-round staff for state legislators at taxpayers' expense. Since that study was publicly released, there has been zero public discussion of the purported benefits and likely costs of implementing one of the three staffing proposals presented. Aside from a brief presentation to the Legislative Council late last year, we have not heard any further discussion, seen any proposed legislation that details how a staffing plan would be implemented, received any message from Governor Lujan Grisham and, most importantly, have not seen how much funding will be necessary to implement whatever approach is being selected to provide year-round staff. This lack of information, in turn, would logically cause any engaged member of the public, media outlet, and legislator to assume the Majority has decided to shelve the staffing proposal until a later date.

As many in our Caucus have noted, we have serious concerns about using taxpayer money to hire hundreds of staff people to work at the pleasure of House and Senate members. Further, providing a fair opportunity to express that opposition to the three aforementioned staffing proposals is an essential component of thoughtful consideration in the House of Representatives, and additional discussion and debate is critical if any one of the three staffing options presented were to advance.

We are writing today because there are rumors circulating in the Roundhouse that one of the staffing proposals is, in fact, moving forward, but is not being done as a standalone bill. These reports indicate that as much as \$10 million will be added to the state budget bill (House Bill 2) at the end of the House Appropriations and Finance Committee's (HAFC) deliberation of the state budget during what is called "Catch Up and Clean Up." Preventing or greatly reducing needed discussion and debate by the full membership of HAFC is unacceptable given the importance of this matter.

Therefore, our hope is that these rumors and reports are not true, and that a complete and thorough discussion will be conducted to determine if a consensus can develop as to whether or how year-round staff for legislators should be provided. We can disagree on the staffing proposals that were presented last year, but any decision should be made after a public and robust debate.

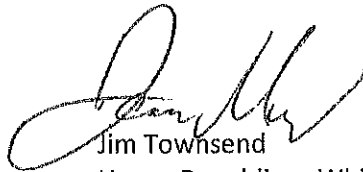
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Please let us know as soon as possible as to whether there is any validity to our concerns. The public has put their trust in us to be transparent when considering major policy changes such as the staffing proposal. We look forward to your prompt response.

Respectfully yours,



Ryan Lane  
House Republican Leader



Jim Townsend  
House Republican Whip