



# Robins Consulting

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April 11, 2023

**James Robins – HF 1830 submitted testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee - 4/12/2023**

**RE: HF 1830 – as amended on 3/30/2023 in House State and Local Government Finance and Policy**

Chair Olson, Republican Lead Garofalo and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on providing prescribed salary setting authority via an independent Compensation Council as proposed in the amended HF 1830 / standalone HF 3023, and the modified MMB-proposed version contained in HF 2940 passed earlier by the House State and Local Committee. For context, I served on the Compensation Council in 2017 and 2019, and declined an opportunity to continue serving in 2021 based primarily on the consistent lack of legislative consideration for the Council's recommendations.

Conceptually, I support the overall thrust of an independent Compensation Council, as well as the pending salary recommendations of the 2023 panel, and the repeal of state agency pay tier designations in 15A.0815 as constituted in HF 2940, first engrossment. The repeal of state agency pay tiers was strongly supported in the Council's 2019 recommendations to the Legislature.

Speaking only for myself, please consider the following three major concerns with the plan as currently constituted in the amended HF 1830:

- Deliberations of the Council should be lengthened well beyond a three-month period – February-April, allowing for extensive meetings in the even-numbered years with action to be taken effective in the following biennium. The resulting public participation in this important process should be encouraged.
- Lobbyists should be prohibited from Council appointment in a similar way to the limitation in effect for the Legislative Salary Council. As a state-registered lobbyist involved with state agency deliberations, it would be a conflict of interest for me to participate in prescribing salaries for the heads of agencies or state officers – in contrast to merely making recommendations as I had participated in under current state law.

- The appointment structure should be modified to include appointments input from the Legislative branch - which is responsible for state budget adoption - while preserving the current 50/50 political balance so no single party can control salary decision-making. This could be accomplished by adding four additional members to the Council, one each from the House majority and minority, and Senate majority and minority, balanced against the eight appointments each made by the Governor and Chief Justice.

As the proposed Compensation Council restructuring stands, an overall good concept is moving forward hampered by the lack of due consideration or benefit of adequate public input. In my view, the Council's pay recommendations and repeal of the agency pay tier structure are justified, but fuller discussion of how best to constitute an independent Compensation Council would be warranted during the legislative interim. Extending the current Compensation Council's service term to Dec. 15, 2023 to make a fully considered recommendation would accomplish that goal.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Robins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

James Robins

Cc: Rep. Pat Garofalo