

Testimony in opposition to SB 800

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Chair Dingfelder and Environment and Natural Resources Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee and present testimony in opposition to SB 800. I represent the Linn County Road Department in Linn County Oregon. My department is responsible for more than 1,100 miles of roadway and more than 325 bridge structures. I also am here on behalf of the Oregon Association of County Engineers and Surveyors (OACES) and on behalf of the City of Millersburg, Oregon as a member of the City Council. I'm also authorized to convey that the Association of Oregon Counties opposes this bill.

Our opposition to SB 800 is primarily based on two principles. First, we are opposed to legislation that imposes additional burdens on our maintenance operations without a clear and considerable public benefit. Second, we are opposed to the potential increase in the cost of our operations in the form of fees to other agencies with no perceptible benefit to us.

Many road authorities (counties, cities, State of Oregon, etc.) utilize herbicides for vegetation management along their transportation systems in order to provide safe sight distances; clearances for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians; and to accommodate the run off of rain fall from pavement surfaces. Herbicides are used along with a combination of other vegetation control methods including mechanical apparatus such as graders and mowers and hand tools where appropriate. In many cases, particularly on rural agricultural roadways, herbicide application is a critical component of our noxious weed management program.

New regulations that impact our ability to use herbicides will result in higher costs to local agencies and a corresponding reduction in maintenance accomplished. Rural counties are already struggling financially. Additional burdens in the form of administrative costs will have a negative impact on the overall safety of the traveling public.

Public agencies are already required to do much of what is required by SB 800. What we are not currently required to do is pay a fee to DEQ, and we are not required to list each specific

property where herbicides are applied. I estimate that SB 800 will increase Linn County's administrative costs by approximately \$15,000 per year, not including DEQ fees.

Our records are available to the public, if requested, and we have a program in place that allows adjacent property owners to "opt out" of herbicide application along their frontage. Currently, public agencies can choose not to utilize herbicides if that reflects the desires of their constituents. On the other hand, cities and counties who have citizens who appreciate a well-managed and multi-faceted vegetation management program can make responsible use of herbicides.

We urge you to consider the significant impact of SB 800 on struggling public agencies. We ask that you do not support the legislation in its current form. We are very willing to meet with stakeholders to discuss how their interests can be met without negatively impacting the safety of Oregon's rural highways.

Thank you again for this opportunity I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.