



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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DATE: February 4, 2020

TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Kristopher Strickler, Director
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SUBJECT: Senate Bill 1545 – Trooper level increase for safer Oregon roads

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Oregon Department of Transportation begins with safety. Senate Bill 1545 will improve highway safety, and bolster the state's efforts toward zero deaths and serious injuries. ODOT supports the patrol trooper staffing levels outlined in SB 1545.

DISCUSSION

ODOT strives to provide a safe and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects people and helps Oregon's communities and economy thrive.

Safety is Priority Number One – and safety is not achieved by accident, without effort, or in absence of investment. ODOT's safety efforts centers around the "4 E's": engineering, education, enforcement, and emergency service. One of the core ways highway safety happens is by the presence and active engagement of law enforcement.

Historic lows in state trooper levels have led to predictable results. Despite engineering improvements and technological safety advancements in our vehicles, we continue to lose an alarming number of Oregonians to traffic deaths. Oregon's roadways saw 506 fatalities in 2018. Research shows over 90% of traffic crashes are due to a single factor: driver error.

The presence of law enforcement improves driver behavior. Studies show increasing law enforcement presence and engagement reduces crashes; seeing a law enforcement vehicle in the rear-view mirror, or stopped with our fellow driver at the side of the road, immediately improves our behavior. Even knowing a road is a well-traveled path for officers makes us second-guess our texting and check our speed. Trooper presence is an essential component of a safe system.

SUMMARY

Stated simply, SB 1545 is nothing short of a life-saving piece of legislation, and ODOT supports this measure. More state troopers will encourage safer driving behavior and will make a substantial difference as we pursue zero deaths and serious injuries on Oregon's roads.