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Jo Ann Hardesty Commissioner **Chris Warner** Director

March 8, 2021

Senator Prozanski, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE, Salem OR 97301

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) supports HB 2523, which would waive the fee to reinstate a driver's license if the license was suspended for failure to pay a traffic fine.

In the first special session held in 2020, the Oregon Legislature passed HB 4210, which repealed driver's license suspension as a consequence of failing to pay a traffic fine. The City of Portland supported this progressive bill. Many people unable to pay a fine are making difficult choices about their finances every day. While HB 4210 allows for driver's license reinstatement without paying outstanding traffic fines, the cited person is still required to pay a reinstatement fee; a fee that is often out of reach for many Oregonians.

HB 2523 offers a path to reinstate these individuals' licenses without paying the fee, which benefits both them and their communities. A report released by the Financial Justice Project's San Francisco Fine and Fees Task Force found that failure to pay traffic fines is commonly because the individual is unable to pay, and rarely because they chose not to pay. The report explains that punitive measures for failure to pay a traffic fine fall disproportionately on people in poverty and people of color. Paying a reinstatement fee can be particularly daunting to those who have lost their jobs or struggled to find new jobs after their driving privileges were revoked. Furthermore, suspensions have ripple effects in the community. People who no longer have their driving privileges cannot meet basic family needs such as transporting kids to school, aiding sick family members or running basic errands like grocery shopping. Finally, people who drive on a suspended license are not insured, and uninsured drivers increase economic risk for all road users.

A 2018 investigation from the publication *Street Roots* showed that driver's license suspension unduly burdens low-income communities in Oregon. The report analyzed 90,600 driver's license suspensions in 2017 due to failure to pay a traffic fine, and concluded the suspensions disproportionately impacted low-income individuals and people of color. These same individuals now face the uphill hurdle of paying an additional fee to reinstate their license.



The Portland Bureau of Transportation fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the ADA Title II, and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For accommodations, complaints and information, call (503) 823-5185, City TTY (503) 823-6868, or use Oregon Relay Service: 711.

HB 2523 extends Oregon's commitment to removing individual wealth as a barrier to driving privilege. This policy will help advance equity outcomes in our state and for this reason PBOT supports HB 2523. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Warner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and the last name "Warner" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Warner, Director
Portland Bureau of Transportation