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Joint Committee on Transportation

Robert O'Brien, Oregon Resident, Constituent of Senate District 22 and House District 44

Tuesday, March 30th, 2021

Support for H.B. No. 2538, Relating to Motor Vehicle Exhaust Systems

I am a longtime resident of Oregon and an avid motorcyclist. I strongly support House Bill 2538, Relating to Motor Vehicle Exhaust Systems, which seeks to ban modifications designed to increase vehicle noise and make it easier for law enforcement to enforce such a ban.

Existing Oregon Statute 815.250 already prohibits the use of vehicles without a proper exhaust system on Oregon's highways. House Bill 2538's proposal to amend this statute is a welcome and reasonable compromise that will still allow motorsport performance enthusiasts to use aftermarket exhaust systems that do not amplify or increase noise emissions.

My own experience has been that excessively loud exhausts are distracting on our state's highways, they can make it difficult to sleep at home and also challenging to carry on a conversation in public. Furthermore, beyond the nuisances that a loud exhaust may cause, there is a genuine safety concern when considering the difficulty of hearing emergency sirens or horns over an unnecessarily loud vehicle.

Regarding that concern, as a motorcyclist, I wear earplugs and a helmet while in motion. I wear the helmet to help protect myself against collision and the earplugs to protect against hearing loss. I do this because a study published in the Open Acoustics Journal found that while wearing a helmet and operating a motorcycle at highway speeds, noise generated by wind turbulence exceeds the noise from the motorcycle itself and reaches levels that can cause hearing loss. Besides long-term effects, the temporary threshold shift from short-term exposure can put me at risk of failing to hear important alerts, such as a horn sounding to warn me of an imminent collision.

The irony of this is that with my earplugs in, and my helmet on, I also need to be able to hear these sounds, which may not be possible when I find myself adjacent to something else audibly competing for my attention, like a large truck with a straight pipe exhaust.

I would like to thank Representative Sollman and supporters of this bill for engaging with the community in this bill's development and finding a reasonable compromise that respects the rights of all stakeholders. Thank you for this opportunity to testify and lend my support to House Bill 2538.