



To : Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon, and all the members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Fr: Mary Peveto, Neighbors for Clean Air

RE: Support: SB 5517 POP 110 – restoring DEQ’s Vehicle Inspection Program

Neighbors for Clean Air is a grassroots advocacy organization that seeks to protect Oregonians from harmful air pollution by empowering neighborhoods and communities with a strong understanding of the sources of toxic air contaminants and identify effective ways to reduce exposure.

Oregon DEQ’s Vehicle Inspection Program is a powerful tool to control the largest source of air pollution in Oregon and meet environmental justice goals. Transportation is the single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution in the region, all of which disproportionately impact lower-income and communities of color. Already responsible for 40% of carbon emissions in the region, transportation-related emissions are up 6% for 2019, and 14% over the last five years. This is a contributing factor, pushing our regional levels of Ozone up dangerously close to exceeding National Ambient Air Quality Standards. And of that, gasoline vehicles are the largest source of carbon emissions in the region. While today’s vehicles are *manufactured* to burn less fuel and burn that fuel cleaner, **verifying regular maintenance vehicles is critical** to reducing greenhouse gas and harmful tailpipe pollution. The Vehicle Inspection Program ensures cars - and their pollution control systems – are well maintained. In fact, **1 in 4 cars are repaired** in between receiving their renewal notice and visiting a DEQ Clean Air Station to get tested. In absence of the program and the requirement of the test, degradation of emissions standards would be inevitable.

Oregon DEQ gets the customer service right for the right price. Compliance is ensured because DEQ does an insanely good job at making it easy. I recently went through the NE 33rd DEQ testing station on a Saturday and was in and out within 10 minutes with my DEQ emissions test and DMV registration renewal complete! I am not alone: 97% of customers report positive experiences and test times of ~ 10 minutes.

Maintaining emissions testing as a public service, as opposed to a for-profit enterprise, is key to equity, and reducing the burden on those who rely on older vehicles. Oregon’s fees – including the increase reflected in SB 5517 – are among the lowest in the nation and are approximately 1/3 of privatized programs. No program in the country provides all of the customer-focused benefits of Oregon, including unlimited free testing – which is a particularly important equity issue for those who rely on the older vehicles. Oregon has demonstrated year

after year it can deliver high levels of service, compliance and customer satisfaction without unduly raising the cost. Ratifying the current \$4 fee increase represents is the first increase in the program for over 20 years. In contrast, if this fee had been set to adjust with inflation over that same time, it would be currently set at almost \$30. This means that both individuals and the DEQ Too businesses are receiving a significant value at current fee rates.

Neighbors for Clean Air is concerned about a national trend to move toward exclusively privatizing emissions testing. Not only is there concern that it minimizes the prioritization of regional air quality goals, but analysis from other parts of the country indicate that a move to privatization increases costs to customers as there is no regulation over additional fees that private sector businesses can add to the service. Maintaining a strong publicly funded option ensures that consumers have a transparent choice, and can see real costs associated with the testing.

We urge you to ratify the DEQ VIP fee increase to ensure the program can continue its critical work to protect our air quality.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on such an important bill.

Kind regards,
Mary Peveto