



OREGON STATE POLICE OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

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Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield, Vice-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Tanya Henderson, and I am writing to request your support of Senate Bill 211, on behalf of the Oregon State Police Officers Association.

As you know, the pandemic has served as a sharp reminder for all of us that public safety is key to thriving. Our State Troopers are here to help with that – they keep our communities and our roads safe.

As the OSPOA President, I work with troopers who respond to calls without adequate back up. Many work in rural Oregon where many times they are the only law enforcement officer on duty.

But the bottom line is there are not enough of us.

Trooper coverage peaked in the late 70s. In 1980, the year that OSP funding was disconnected from the gas tax, there were over 600 OSP troopers on the road. The population in Oregon was 2.6 million. Today, we have nearly twice as many Oregonians – over 4.2 million – but less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the troopers.

Our low staffing level amounts to less than 10 Patrol Troopers for every 100,000 Oregonians – well below the national average. This means that large portions of our state highways and interstates are not patrolled 24 hours a day.

I stopped a driving complaint on Interstate Five near milepost 71. The vehicle had been reported as swerving in front of semi-trucks and slamming on the brakes. This vehicle has nearly caused several crashes. When I stopped the vehicle, the female driver appeared dazed and would not follow any directions I gave her. I was able to determine that she was having some type of mental health issue. The issue for me was that I was by myself and did not have back up. The female would not get out of the vehicle. I called for back-up and my nearest back up was in Central Point. I had to try and communicate with the female and keep her from driving the vehicle any further. I waited for 45 minutes for two other troopers to arrive. The female was taken into protective custody and transported to the hospital for treatment.

Senate Bill 211 will help fix this problem. Senate Bill 211 will tie Oregon State Police Patrol Trooper staffing to Oregon's population gradually over the next 9 years. The demand for Troopers continues to increase due to population growth and corresponding increase in overall vehicle miles traveled on our highways. If passed, this important initiative will incrementally increase staffing levels beginning in 2023. This 10-year-plan will increase our ratio to 15 troopers per 100,000 citizens by 2030. It is undeniable that OSP staffing levels at Patrol offices are a dire concern, not only for the citizens we serve, but for Trooper safety.

For too many decades, OSP service has been under-prioritized and overlooked, resulting in unpatrolled highways and increased fatalities throughout the state. The 2021 Legislative Session and the American Rescue Plan funds offer the perfect opportunity to change that course.

I request that you pass Senate Bill 211 to make clear that we must restore 24/7 trooper coverage on our highways.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your commitment to improving our state's investment in State Troopers.

Thank you,

Tanya Henderson
President
Oregon State Police
Officers' Association