

To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

From: Lesley Adams

Date: 3/17/23

Dear Co Chair Pham, Co Chair Dembrow, and members of the committee.

RE: In support of ODOT budget HB 5040

My name is Lesley Adams and I am writing in support of HB 5040. I have resided in Jackson County for the last 25 years. I moved to the area to finish college at Southern Oregon University and I never left because I found southern Oregon to be a wonderful place to live and raise my son. I am a staff member at SEIU 503 and get the privilege of working with ODOT employees from the Pacific ocean to the eastern high desert, and throughout the mighty Rogue and Umpqua Valleys in between.

On September 8, 2020 I had just settled my son into his first day of 1<sup>st</sup> grade via Zoom due to the pandemic. I went into another room to begin my remote work when I looked outside of my bedroom window to see a huge plume of smoke erupting two blocks from my house. I have lived through many fires seasons and know the difference between different types of smoke and fire behavior; I knew this was different and a serious threat. Within minutes we were evacuating from what would become known as the Almeda fire, which catastrophically burned down large portions of Talent and Phoenix, Oregon that day. The hours and days ahead were full of chaos and fear. Our towns had little egress routes from the raging inferno; I-5 was closed in one direction and semi-trucks were rolling through town and clogging roads, with reports of additional fire on the eastern egress route. Along with other agencies, ODOT crews without hesitation stepped up to perform emergency response for thousands of people experiencing one of the most frightening days of their lives. That day generated in me a deeper respect for ODOT crews that not only maintain roads, but step up to help communities in moments of crisis.

Last weekend I was snowshoeing in a remote area of the Siskiyou Mountains. I was only able to access the area because while I was comfortably sleeping in a warm house the night before, ODOT crews were out plowing roads in cold, dark and icy conditions. While enjoying the snow in a remote area, I came across an elderly man whose car had become stuck in snow and mud. After engaging with the elderly man, it became apparent that he likely had Parkinson's and was deaf. His cell phone was dead and he seemed disoriented. He was wearing tennis shoes and jeans and was walking around his car in about a foot of melting snow. We were two hours from sundown and it was clear that this elderly man could be in a very bad situation soon without help. We called his insurance roadside assistance number and they said that they would send a tow truck up as soon as possible, but that it was a Saturday night and it might take a while. They suggested that they also call incident response and maybe OSP could come out and make sure the man did not freeze to death while waiting for a tow truck. I stayed with the man and

about 15 minutes later an ODOT truck rolled up with two guys from a relatively nearby maintenance crew. They heard the call, and they showed up. They enthusiastically jumped out of the car and pushed the man's vehicle out of the snow and made sure he returned home safely.

I share these two stories because we humans are part of community. We are not meant to weather this life in isolation. We are social creatures that rely on each other for support and help. The world is increasingly challenging with the burdens of erratic wildfire, intense storms, poverty and inequity. I am so grateful that ODOT crews are out there and answer the call to help when needed. They went to work in the Alameda fire to help others get out of harm's way. They find the stranded motorists to help them return to their loved ones in one piece.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the ODOT budget. I am glad to know that ODOT crews are out there; please support them by showing up for them and passing this budget.

Lesley Adams