

Submitter: Claire Vlach  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure: HB2098

I prepared this testimony for the 5/4 public hearing, but was unable to present it due to time running out. Please accept it in writing instead:

Co-chairs Frederick and McClain, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Claire Vlach, I live in Portland, and I'm testifying as a member of Oregon Walks. I'm also the mother of two children, ages 4 and 6, and it's their futures that I'm concerned about.

I support the construction of a new seismically safe I-5 bridge with better transit and active transportation options. But funding for the new bridge must take into account our other transportation needs, and, because this bill calls for general obligation bonding, our other statewide needs as well.

\$1 billion is a lot of money. I'm currently serving on the Powell Boulevard Safety Workgroup, which is working to improve conditions along one of the many dangerous orphan highways in our state. Since our work started six months ago, at least two more people have died along the corridor, yet we've been told repeatedly that we don't have enough money for basic safety improvements like crosswalks. I realize that not all of the money being proposed for the bridge would be available for orphan highway safety, but we have other statewide infrastructure needs that need funding too. The fact that the bridge would be funded through general obligation bonds also means that we're locking up money that our state will need for other non-transportation priorities.

I'm worried that paying back a billion dollars' worth of bonds means that the money will be coming out of my kids' education and from projects like Powell Boulevard, a dangerous street that my family needs to use on a regular basis. I urge you to use fiscal restraint when it comes to this project, and to consider amendments that will lead to the construction of a smaller, cheaper bridge.

Thank you for your consideration.