



# FOREST GROVE POLICE DEPARTMENT

2102 Pacific Avenue  
Forest Grove, OR 97116  
Phone: 503-992-3260  
Fax: 503-359-3519  
[www.forestgrove.or-gov](http://www.forestgrove.or-gov)

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**To: Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation**

**From: Henry Reimann, Chief of Police**

**Date: May 15, 2023**

**Re: HB 2951; Testimony In Support Of Spanish Driver's Education Grant Program**

**Co-Chairs McLain and Frederick, and members of the committee,**

I am writing to you to express my support of HB 2951, which would allocate \$500,000 to Centro Cultural, a Washington County based nonprofit, to begin a Spanish driver education program.

Properly trained and licensed drivers makes our roads safer. According to the Oregon Department of Transportation, the rate of test failure for people who took the written test in Spanish was 23% higher than the rate of test failure for those who took the test in English, owing to poorly translated driving test questions. The question, then, becomes how we can ensure a higher rate of success for our Spanish speaking community.

During a traffic stop, police will usually issue citations to drivers who are unlicensed. Data strongly suggests that Latino drivers in Washington County have higher rates of driving unlicensed than other drivers. According to the Statistical Analysis Center of the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, the Forest Grove Police Department issued citations to Latino drivers at a higher rate in comparison to other populations. Similar disproportionate levels of citations were issued to Latino drivers by other police agencies, to include the Oregon State Police, the cities of Eugene, Hermiston, Hillsboro, Sherwood, Tigard and the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

Currently, there is a severe lack of opportunity for people who speak Spanish as their primary language to enroll in traffic safety education courses because the vast majority of these programs are primarily English based.

Establishing a pilot grant program to fund traffic safety education courses in Spanish would improve traffic safety, increase licensing rates, and expand equitable access for those most facing barriers in becoming licensed. Our past practices have contributed to disproportionate citations, arrests and/or searches of Latino drivers. Establishing a Spanish language driver education program could promote long lasting traffic safety and equity benefits that can serve as a model for other communities experiencing language barriers, which in turn will increase the number of licensed Oregonians.

Centro Cultural is a well-established and trusted community-based organization located in Cornelius and Hillsboro. Centro Cultural has spent over fifty years cultivating trust and relationships with the Latino and immigrant populations. The organization has provided educational opportunities to prepare participants to open businesses, complete GEDs, and develop careers. They have been a highly reliable partner for all of Washington County, and for the Forest Grove Police Department and community. I have worked with Centro Cultural for many years and understand that the Latino community feels secure participating in their programs or events. Centro Cultural is very well-equipped to meet the need for Spanish language driver education.

I am urging you to pass and fund HB 2951, which would set up a targeted pilot program to provide Spanish language driver education courses to Washington County residents. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry F. Reimann', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Henry F. Reimann  
Chief of Police