



Speaker Fahey, President Wagner, Vice-Chairs, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Melissa Unger. I am the Executive Director of SEIU Local 503, representing 70,000 caregivers and public workers across Oregon — many whose work is unseen.

Over the last two months, I've spent time with our ODOT members as they've faced layoffs. I've heard their fears about paying their rent or mortgage, caring for their families, and keeping food on the table. But what I want to share today is their role in keeping Oregon moving.

ODOT workers are first responders. Our maintenance system is designed so they are often the first on the scene — when there's a fire, a crash, a landslide, or an ice storm. In remote places, we have ODOT housing which ensures workers can respond quickly when other first responders may be further out. Across the state, employees must live within 45 minutes of their shop so that Oregonians and Oregon businesses can use our roads to keep our economy moving.

I've heard many ideas during this process. But as you've heard from Kelly none of these fix the underlying challenge of how ODOT's funding is siloed. The funding streams are highly regulated through the constitution, federal government and state laws that are not controlled by the agency. I've been at SEIU while the Legislature has passed the last two transportation packages. Both focused on new projects, not day-to-day operations or the emergency role ODOT plays. In fact, operational funding was often deprioritized to pay for new projects, making the problem worse.

I am not going to defend every decision ODOT has made, but I do know that they have been trying to implement many of different directives of the Legislature to only have that plan change without an alternative solution presented.

One story that stays with me is from a homecare worker. During an ice storm, ODOT cleared the roads so she could reach her consumer — someone who was trapped at home without food. This is about ODOT workers, but it is also about every Oregonian who depends on them.

As you cast your vote, I hope you'll think of the caregiver trying to reach their client, the parent needing to get to their child, or the family driving to care for an aging loved one. If you have a different idea on how to solve this problem, keep that idea alive because we will need it as we work long term to solve this problem. But this week the choice is urgent: if this package doesn't pass, nearly 1,000 jobs will be lost on September 15th. And Oregon's emergency and transportation system will be weakened across the state.

**1-844-503-SEIU**  
MAIN OFFICE

**525 NE OREGON ST.**  
PORTLAND, OR 97232

**@SEIU503**  
FACEBOOK  
INSTAGRAM  
BLUESKY  
TWITTER

**SEIU503.ORG**



Thank you.

Melissa Unger  
Executive Director  
SEIU Local 503

**1-844-503-SEIU**  
MAIN OFFICE

**525 NE OREGON ST.**  
PORTLAND, OR 97232

---

**@SEIU503**  
FACEBOOK  
INSTAGRAM  
BLUESKY  
TWITTER

**SEIU503.ORG**