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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation  
Funding  
Measure, Appointment or LC 2  
Topic:

Good afternoon,

I hope you remember this testimony today, because it comes from the heart of someone who has dedicated their life to public service.

Since I was a teenager, all I have ever wanted is to help people get home safely. That simple goal—making sure families reunite at the end of each day—has guided me into public service. I am now 30 years old, a senior planner, and I truly love the work I do. I love serving Oregonians.

But I am heartbroken at what I see happening. The attitudes of some of our legislators, and the climate they have created toward public servants, make it nearly impossible for us to do the jobs Oregonians rely on us to do.

Let me be clear: accountability matters. I welcome it. Every public servant should. But you cannot expect services to get better if you keep cutting off the very people who provide them. You cannot demand more from us while giving us less to work with.

I understand why Oregonians hesitate to raise taxes. As a first-time homeowner, I know what it feels like to write a \$5,000 check to the government each year. It isn't easy. But I also know this: I would gladly pay more if it meant that kids could get to school safely in the snow, that drivers weren't stranded on dangerous highways, and that families could depend on us to keep roads open and safe.

That's the trade-off here—lives versus pennies. I pray that fiscally conservative senators realize the true cost of inaction. Because while they may sleep soundly, our maintenance crews won't, our planners won't, our district managers won't. We'll be awake, carrying the weight of knowing Oregonians are put in danger—not because we failed in our duties, but because we were stripped of the tools to protect them.

Right now, Oregon already has the lowest transportation tax on the West Coast. That is not efficiency; that is neglect. We claim to value freedom in this country—that our voice makes us free. But a voice is meaningless without choice. True freedom comes from having options: to walk, to bike, to take a bus safely. Otherwise, shouting “no new taxes” in a legislative session becomes the illusion of freedom—while in reality, Oregonians are left with fewer choices and more risks.

And let's talk about who suffers most. These layoffs and personnel "bumping" hit young workers the hardest. Those with the least seniority—often the youngest, most energetic, and most innovative—are the first to go. This bill doesn't just weaken today's workforce; it crushes the generation that represents Oregon's future.

The economic damage is also real. When we cut staff, we lose expertise and stop hiring consultants. In just two months, I personally absorbed three major projects in-house after half my team was laid off. That is not efficiency—it's desperation. Expecting public servants to carry these loads is like demanding we drive your car while removing the wheels. And now, every Oregonian is being asked to ride in that same broken vehicle.

In Region 2 alone, we've had to fire two-thirds of our communications team. That means when mountain passes close this winter, no one will be there to tell drivers. Half our geology team is gone too. That means we can no longer fully assess unstable slopes—until tragedy proves us right.

This is not theory. This is not numbers on a budget sheet. This is about lives, safety, and the dignity of serving the people of Oregon.

So I ask you: please do not balance the budget on the backs of public servants and on the safety of everyday families. The costs of these cuts are not measured in dollars—they will be measured in lives disrupted, communities put at risk, and futures stolen from the next generation of Oregonians.