

Hello Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on Oregon's biennial budget. My name is Helena Birecki. I moved to Portland from Tillamook County this fall; I'm a Pilates teacher and I do not own a car. I am extremely concerned about climate change, and the current US administration's decimation of so many programs that promote decent lives and livelihoods for Americans.

You, the Ways and Means Committee are Oregon's bulwark to protect our health both directly via health care, water and air quality, and via smart solutions for our homes and transportation sector. I ask you to prioritize programs that help us stay safe and healthy in our daily lives.

First, I ask you to fund home heat pump and weatherization assistance— especially for environmental justice and lower income families. In the past few years we've seen hundreds of death from heat waves which are being intensified by climate change. Access to lifesaving heating and cooling should be universal, not dependent on the size of someone's savings account.

I strongly support the Building Resilience Coalition's priorities for

- **\$30 million for Rental Home Heat Pump**
- **\$15 million for Community Home Heat Pump Deployment,**
- **One Stop Shop 2.0 (HB3081), and**
- **Community Resilience Hub funding.**

I also ask you to provide PUC with the modest funding it requires to transition to **Performance Based Regulation of Utilities (SB 688)**.

Second, I ask you to prioritize Transportation funding for active transportation and electric vehicles including electric bicycles and school buses. Improving air quality and opportunities to exercise improves human health, both mental and physical. To quote the American Medical Association: "Regular physical exercise is one of the single most important contributors to a healthy lifestyle and delivers benefits which extend far beyond the doctor's office."* From a both a money and a time perspective, active transportation is the most affordable way to exercise.

The combination of good walking and biking networks plus public transit allows people to go further distances in a way that is personally healthy, joyful, and improves public health by reducing pollution and traffic accidents.

Fewer cars on the road also means fewer people killed in accidents and less road maintenance costs— did you know that a single car trip does as much damage to a road as 160,000 bicyclists?*

Please increase funding to transportation programs which

- **enhance active transportation: walking, biking + public transit, and**
- **continue to support electric vehicles— especially electric bikes (HB 2963)**

For me, being able to bike to the transit stop and do work on Tri-Met is absolutely freeing. All Oregonians should have that option— less densely populated areas might not have a Tri-Met bus, but a minivan-sized public transit option might serve the population more energy efficiently, cost effectively, and frequently than a full-sized bus.

The beauty of these priorities for you— the ways and means committee— is that not only are they good for Oregonians but in the long run each investment will reap many times its dollar amount in benefits.

- Efficient homes lower utility bills and reduce strain on grid and other infrastructure.
- Both home electrification and active transportation lower health care costs by reducing pollution.
- If modeshare shifts significantly towards bicycles, ODOT's maintenance burden will be significantly lightened as 160,000 bicycle trips can be taken before the wear and tear on the road matches that of a single car trip.**

Thank you for your time and for investing in a healthy and just future for Oregon,

Helena Birecki

References:

*<https://www.ama-assn.org/topics/exercise>

** The Relationship between Vehicle Weight, Road Damage, and You

(<https://www.denenapoints.com/relationship-vehicle-weight-road-damage/>) Road wear and tear calculations based on a bicycle+rider weight of 200 pounds and a car+rider weight of 4000 pounds (Please note an *average* US car weighs 4100 pounds (<https://www.autolist.com/guides/average-weight-of-car>)).