

Submitter: Christina Buehler

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Session Committee On Transportation
Funding

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3991

When I was a child, vacations with my family always meant one thing: a hotel with a pool. My dad made those moments magical. He would have us sit on his hands, dip beneath the water, and then launch us up with every bit of strength he had. We would soar for a moment, suspended above the surface, trying to stretch that jump as high as possible. My dad's joy wasn't in the splash—it was in watching us reach higher than he ever could.

That was his goal in life, too. He wanted to launch us further than where he had started. And where he started was a place most of us today can hardly imagine. He grew up so far below the poverty line that on his way home from grade school, he collected cans to buy a single gallon of milk. That milk, split with his brother, was dinner. That was his normal.

And yet, in one generation, he managed to raise me in the middle class. He worked relentlessly so that his children would have stability, opportunity, and dignity. He believed in the promise that, in America and in Oregon, hard work could propel you upward.

When I became a parent, I wanted to do the same for my children. On our great American road trip, I imagined carrying on the tradition—launching my kids in those hotel pools, showing them what it feels like to rise. But the pools were closed, shuttered by government mandates. And I've started to wonder: in today's Oregon, will my children even have the chance to rise at all?

Right now, my family is considered upper middle class. But instead of thinking about how far I can launch my children above me, I am calculating whether they will even stay afloat. The possibility that one generation could move from poverty to middle class—the very thing my dad accomplished—feels like it has already left this state. That doesn't happen here anymore.

Every new tax, every new burden, chips away at what families can save, what they can dream, what they can hand forward. It's like adding weights to a swimmer already treading water. And the danger is real: one unexpected bill, one wrong step, and my children could land headfirst in an empty pool.

We often hear calls to acknowledge that we stand on stolen land. But I believe we must also acknowledge something just as sobering: we are borrowing this land, this

state, and this future from our children. And right now, we are leaving them with debt, with barriers, and with fewer opportunities to rise.

That is not the Oregon I want to hand to my children.

I urge you: do not pass this bill. Raising taxes will not help Oregon families rise—it will drown out their chance to climb higher. Please give families like mine the breathing room to invest in our children, in their futures, and in the hope that they can still rise above the waterline.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Thank you for considering my testimony.