

Submitter: Tara McLaughlin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Session Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3991

Testimony in Opposition to HB 3991 (2025 1st Special Session)

Chair, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tara McLaughlin, owner of Ayla Mac Hair Company in Beaverton, Oregon. I am writing today in strong opposition to HB 3991.

Why HB 3991 harms small businesses and working Oregonians

HB 3991 stacks new and higher costs onto people who are already stretched: it raises the state gas tax to 46¢ per gallon, increases vehicle registration and title fees, doubles the statewide payroll transit tax from 0.1% to 0.2%, and creates a per-mile road-usage charge for EVs. These are not abstract policies—these are real costs that directly hit Oregon small businesses and households.

For small businesses like mine, these costs compound. We rely on vehicles, deliveries, and payroll. This bill will raise our overhead, force price increases, and reduce our ability to keep staff employed. At the same time, Oregon families are already struggling with the cost of living. Adding nearly \$800 million in new fees and taxes will not only hurt existing businesses but also drive more employers to leave Oregon entirely. That means fewer jobs, fewer opportunities, and more citizens forced to struggle to make ends meet.

Process concerns and public trust

This proposal already failed once during the regular 2025 session. Now it is being pushed again in a special session scheduled over the Labor Day holiday weekend—a move that is nothing short of shady business practices. Ramming through complex legislation at the last minute, when many Oregonians are with their families, undermines transparency and public trust.

The Governor and the bill's supporters are showing that their priorities are not the people of Oregon but their own political agendas. That is unacceptable.

Accountability first: audit and transparency

Before raising a single tax or fee, the Legislature should require a full, independent audit of the state budget. Most importantly, the Oregon Department of Transportation's spending practices must be completely transparent, with line-by-line public reporting. Oregonians have a right to know how their money is being spent before they are asked to contribute more.

Whom legislators serve

I want to remind you: State representatives and the Governor work for the people of Oregon. You are employees of the citizens who elected you. It is not your role to line the budget with new taxes while ignoring accountability. It is your role to ensure fiscal responsibility, fairness, and the prosperity of all Oregonians.

What to do instead

1. Require independent, transparent audits—statewide and ODOT-specific—before raising revenue.
2. Fix inefficiencies before taxing more: improve cost controls, project delivery, and maintenance prioritization.
3. Follow regular process: give Oregonians real opportunities for testimony and feedback, not rushed holiday hearings.
4. Protect small businesses and jobs: avoid policies that push employers out of Oregon and harm families' financial security.

Until these steps are taken, HB 3991 remains the wrong bill at the wrong time. Please vote NO on HB 3991 and instead bring forward a transparent, audit-first plan that respects taxpayers, supports small businesses, and keeps Oregon's economy strong.

Respectfully,
Tara McLaughlin
Owner, Ayla Mac Hair Company
Beaverton, Oregon