

Submitter: Heather Gaona

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Session Committee On Transportation
Funding

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3991

I am in support of HB3991, primarily to save jobs of 500+ employees. I have been a faithful employee of the state for years, starting as an Office Specialist 1 and now an Operation Policy Analyst 3. As of 9/11 it will be 23 years, only to be let go 4 days later. I'm great at my job, and my position, specifically, has been focused on streamlining processes and expenses for the agency, state, and public.

I urge you to keep in mind that a "no" vote won't be punishing the Executive team. It will be punishing those of us with boots on the ground, including some that despite their full time job, are at the poverty level. It's creating a burden in another way, where snap, food banks, and other services will be hit harder. Where individuals need to file bankruptcy as they won't be able to afford their bills. It's a risk with shipping of goods and services. If they can't get through the roads, there will be a bigger issue with keeping shelves stocked. I will argue that a hike in tax for thousands is still better than hundreds of people in unemployment. I hear a lot about cutting the fat, but those getting cut are not the fat. I fully support auditing, oversight, etc. We and all agencies need that.

I'm not trying to point fingers, but ODOT has communicated a need for 10 years. It was the basis for OreGo Road Usage Charge even. So let me use this analogy. A child cuts their hand. A doctor tells the parents the kids needs stitches. Instead, a parent puts a bandaid on it. Rinse and repeat for 10 days. Now the hand is severely infected. Gangrene has set in. Intervention is now hospitalization and meds, or amputation. Now the parents are mad because treatment is going to cost more. Is it the doctors fault? The child? Or the parent? Maybe the parent couldn't afford it at the time or really didn't know it could get that bad. Maybe the doctor wasn't a great doctor. But in the end, it is the child that suffers. ODOT executive team is the doctor. Us staff are the child, and you all, and the public are the parents. 10 years and the ask has been ignored or been given a band aid. The solution is not ideal, but the decision to allow so many employees to be terminated because of lack of foresight on others behalf is not right either.

Please consider, if nothing else, a way to save the jobs. Don't let hundreds of years of expertise, hard work, and dedicated service walk out the door because of politics.