

Submitter: Tara McLaughlin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4125

Testimony in Strong Opposition to Any Special Legislation Targeting Oregon's Kicker

Chair, Members of the Committee,

My name is Tara McLaughlin, and I am an Oregon small-business owner, taxpayer, and employer. I am submitting this testimony in firm and unequivocal opposition to any attempt to interfere with Oregonians' kicker checks.

Let me be very clear: The kicker is not optional. It is not a bonus. It is not extra. It is money the State collected by mistake—because it failed to budget responsibly. Now, instead of taking responsibility for that failure, this legislature is looking for ways to raid taxpayers' pockets to cover decades of financial mismanagement.

If PERS is underfunded, that is not the fault of Oregon workers or business owners. That crisis was created by years of irresponsible investment decisions, failed oversight, and poor long-term planning by the State itself. In any other setting—especially in small business—mismanagement has consequences. You don't get to make bad financial choices and then force others to foot the bill. Yet that is exactly what this proposal attempts to do.

Taxpayers already carry the weight of rising costs, increased regulations, inflation, and constant tax proposals. Small businesses like mine are expected to stretch every dollar, adjust to reality, and make responsible choices. We don't get to blow past budgets and then demand more money from our customers. The State should be held to the same standard—not rewarded for overspending.

Instead of targeting the kicker, legislators should be asking harder questions:

- Where is the money actually going?
- Why is the State spending more than it can sustain?
- Why have key financial obligations been ignored or mismanaged for years?

These are not taxpayer problems. These are government leadership problems.

Oregonians should not be punished because the State refuses to confront its spending habits. Redirecting or reducing the kicker is not “responsible governance”—it is avoiding accountability. It is using taxpayers as a bailout for mistakes that taxpayers did not make.

I urge this committee to reject any and all efforts to touch the kicker. Respect the law. Respect the taxpayers. And start addressing the root issue: the State's own inability to manage its budget with the same discipline every Oregon family and small business is forced to practice every day.

Thank you.