

Good afternoon Chair Gorsek and members of the committee.

My name is Sarah Risser. I sit on the Executive Committee of Families for Safe Streets National and am a board member of the Portland Chapter.

I lost my 18-year-old son, Henry, in a two-vehicle crash on a rural road. The type of crash I survived is horrifically common in Oregon. Our rural road fatal crash rate is the 4th highest in the entire country. There are only three states with more dangerous rural roads. And that's not all.

A 2025 Washington Post study on pedestrian fatalities listed Portland in the top ten worst cities for increases in pedestrian fatalities since committing to Vision Zero. Across the state, on every type of road, traffic killed over 500 people last year. Thousands more were seriously injured.

For too long, Oregon has invested in transportation projects that don't align with their clearly stated priorities. We're told that safety is the top priority, yet families like mine continue to be devastated by the needless loss of children, siblings, or parents. The cost is too high. We need a better system to ensure all transportation projects align with Oregon's safety priorities so fewer families have to suffer this devastating loss.

The bills we are discussing require projects to be scored on safety, along with other important outcomes, ensuring accountability and transparency. These bills will help ensure proven safety improvements like safer crossings, safer road design, and maintenance are prioritized over expanding projects that increase risk. More importantly, this legislation rescores projects by placing greater emphasis on places where we are falling behind. And we have ample evidence that Oregon has fallen behind the rest of the country in terms of road safety.

These two pieces of legislation will align spending with priorities and, most importantly, help prevent future tragedies so fewer families have to experience the unthinkable.