

Re: Testimony in favor of SB 1569 regarding predatory towing

February 8, 2020

To: Chairman Riley and members of the Senate Government and Emergency Preparedness Committee

From: Shawn Morford, Salem, Oregon (private citizen)

I am writing in support of SB 1569 regarding predatory towing. While there is no doubt that tow operators provide a critical public service in Oregon, a few years ago I was involved in a towing incident that left me rattled and I have hoped that there would be some legislation towards protections for consumers against this.

I worked for a non-profit organization in Forest Grove and occasionally rendezvoused with colleagues in Wilsonville in an out-of-the-way spot that I believed at the time was a public parking area to carpool to meetings, but one early morning I parked there after an owner had put up signs (that I did not see since it was still dark) warning against parking there and listing the phone number of a towing company. When I was dropped off at the location after meetings in Eugene, I thought my car had been stolen until I learned that my car had been towed to industrial NE Portland to a locked yard, some 30 miles away. I found myself stranded in Wilsonville at 8:45 p.m. in the dark with no car. Thankfully, at great inconvenience to her, a colleague drove me up and through the streets of Portland so I could find the yard, pay the towing and storage fees, and claim my vehicle. Finally at almost midnight, I drove away from the yard. The charge was several hundred dollars...easily more than \$400.

I now understand that I was wrong to park in what turned out to be a private parking area. At the same time, I was at the mercy of the towing company that was allowed to tow a distance of 30 miles, leave me stranded, and then set the price for both towing and storage, at its will. The main issue is that I had no recourse. It was scary being left in Wilsonville and driving through industrial Portland late at night but it was even more shocking to be charged such a high rate. I am not certain that there would have been anything stopping this or any towing company from doing anything they chose to do with my vehicle and forcing me to pay their rate in order to get it back. Legislation is sorely needed to provide more accountability and oversight for an industry that can become predatory where well-meaning citizens can be exploited without recourse.

Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story. I strongly support this and any kind of additional protection for consumers against tow operators and companies that wield unchecked power. The establishment of this new board will help provide needed accountability and oversight.