

March 4, 2021

To: OR Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Michelle DuBarry, Portland, OR

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 395

Good Morning Chair Beyer, Chair McLain, and members of the committee:

My name is Michelle DuBarry. I live in Portland, and I am asking you to support SB 395.

My husband and I moved to Oregon 20 years ago. We both grew up in low-income families where car ownership was both a necessity and a constant source of stress. We were drawn to Oregon by the quality of life, and by the reputation of Portland as a place where you could walk, bike, or ride transit almost anywhere. We bought our first house in a working-class neighborhood where parks, schools, light rail, and a grocery store were within easy walking distance.

In 2010, my husband was walking home from that grocery store, pushing our toddler son in a stroller, when they were struck by a careless driver in a crosswalk. Our son endured two surgeries and a night in intensive care, and he died the next day. This crash, like so many others, could have been prevented with simple infrastructure improvements.

In the years since our son died, the number of pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in the U.S. has risen by 62%. This trend is reflected in Portland, where 150 pedestrians have died on our roads in the last ten years, and thousands more have been injured.

These may seem like isolated tragedies, but the implications on the quality of life in our state are profound. I have two living children—twins who are in 2nd grade. As I've gotten to know parents at my neighborhood elementary school, they tell me they remember the crash that killed my son ten years ago. They recount their own close calls with traffic in the neighborhood. They tell me they desperately want to ride bikes and walk to school, playdates, and activities with their children. But they don't feel safe.

The result is neighborhoods and school zones clogged with cars and pollution, children who are deprived of the opportunity to move around the city safely, families stuck with the financial burden of car ownership.

When I heard about Senate Bill 395, I was reminded of the reasons we moved to Oregon two decades ago. Government investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure means families and kids can get outside, breathe cleaner air, and experience the natural beauty of our state. Senate Bill 395 will also prevent other families from experiencing the devastating loss that my family has endured. I urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 395.