



To: Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon, and all the members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

RE: Support: SB 5517 POP 110 – restoring DEQ’s Vehicle Inspection Program

Electrify Now is a volunteer organization devoted to educating the public on the benefits of electrification as the most potent and actionable method to reduce carbon emissions. We advocate for voluntary action on the part of homeowners to adopt electric solutions powered by renewable energy in their lives, and we advocate for policies that make it easier and more affordable for all Oregonians, including disadvantaged communities, to take these actions. Electrification has many benefits beyond reducing carbon emissions – it will improve air and water quality, lower energy consumption and energy costs and provide good paying and safe jobs across wide segments of the Oregon economy.

Oregon DEQ’s Vehicle Inspection Program is a powerful tool to control the largest source of air pollution in Oregon and meet environmental justice goals. Transportation is the single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution in the region, all of which disproportionately impact lower-income and communities of color. Already responsible for 40% of carbon emissions in the region, transportation-related emissions are up 6% for 2019, and 14% over the last five years. This is a contributing factor, pushing our regional levels of Ozone up dangerously close to exceeding National Ambient Air Quality Standards. And of that, gasoline vehicles are the largest source of carbon emissions in the region. While today’s vehicles are *manufactured* to burn less fuel and burn that fuel cleaner, **verifying regular maintenance vehicles is critical** to reducing greenhouse gas and harmful tailpipe pollution. The Vehicle Inspection Program ensures cars - and their pollution control systems – are well maintained. In fact, **1 in 4 cars are repaired** in between receiving their renewal notice and visiting a DEQ Clean Air Station to get tested. In absence of the program and the requirement of the test, degradation of emissions standards would be inevitable.

Maintaining emissions testing as a public service, as opposed to a for-profit enterprise, is key to equity, and reducing the burden on those who rely on older vehicles. Oregon’s fees – including the increase reflected in SB 5517 – are among the lowest in the nation and are approximately 1/3 of privatized programs. No program in the country provides all of the customer-focused benefits of Oregon, including unlimited free testing – which is a particularly important equity issue for those who rely on the older vehicles. Oregon has demonstrated year after year it can deliver high levels of service, compliance and customer satisfaction without unduly raising the cost. Ratifying the current \$4 fee increase represents is the first increase in the program for over 20 years.

We are concerned about a national trend to move toward exclusively privatizing emissions testing. Analysis from other parts of the country indicate that a move to privatization increases costs to customers as there is no regulation over additional fees that private sector businesses can add to the service.

We urge you to ratify the DEQ VIP fee increase to ensure the program can continue its critical work to protect our air quality.

Thank you,

Brian Stewart
Founder
Electrify Now