

**Testimony to the Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
SB 5517**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports SB 5517, which would adopt a small, one-time fee increase already adopted by the Department of Environmental Equality and approved by the Environmental Quality Commission twice for the Vehicle Inspection Program (VIP).

Since 1997, the biennial fee for a motor vehicle certificate of compliance has been a maximum of \$21 in the Portland Vehicle Inspection area, a maximum of \$10 in the Medford Vehicle Inspection area, and a maximum of \$26 for on-site testing at auto dealerships. To keep the program running and responsive to cost of inflation, in June 2020, the Environmental Quality Commission approved \$4 and \$5 temporary VIP fee increases in Portland and Medford, respectively. SB 5517 would codify the fees to be \$25 in Portland metro region, and in the Medford-Ashland region, a maximum of \$15 until June 30, 2021, and then a maximum of \$20. Each certificate of compliance issued on-site to an automobile dealership would be assessed a maximum of \$30, which is a \$4 increase. We believe this one-time increase, which is paid every two years, is fair and reasonable to sustain the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.

The Vehicle Inspection Program is the primary way to reduce vehicle emissions in two key regions- by ensuring that all the engines on the road are not unnecessarily contributing to pollution. Without a vehicle inspection program, smog-forming pollution (ozone) would increase by approximately 20%, and potentially push the Portland Metro and Rogue Valley regions out of EPA air quality attainment. Further, catching engine problems before they become significant will help Oregonians save money from needed repairs in the long run. DEQ partners with United Way Columbia-Willamette for repair funding assistance for those who need it.

DEQ testing centers also allow motorists to renew their registration at the same time, which saves thousands of Oregonians a trip to DMV. Should this fee not be approved, this service would be more limited, placing additional strain and wait times on DMV facilities.

Finally, OEC strongly supports maintaining the same fee across DEQ and DEQ Too testing facilities. An important nuance is that DEQ Too testing facilities are allowed to charge additional fees on top of the base DEQ fee, of an unregulated amount. DEQ Too facilities are

able to market their mechanic services, often allowing a motorist to fix any issue that may present during testing. Allowing these facilities to charge a lower base rate but then impose a surcharge would destabilize the DEQ program and lead to greater inequity in cost to motorists. In other states that have allowed for different rates and privatization that has led to increased fees and less comprehensive service. We would support and encourage DEQ to ensure their website is clearly indicating all DEQ and DEQ Too testing sites available to the public, and what services are offered at each site.

For these reasons we strongly support this modest fee increase, to maintain the high level of services DEQ sites provide.