

Good Evening,

My Name is Dessa DeForest. I am a Senior Trooper with the Oregon State Police out of the Portland Area Command. Two other Oregon State Police Troopers were scheduled to testify, but due to protests in Portland and a shortage of available Troopers they were no longer able to testify.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk about public safety today.

I want to talk about the important role that State Troopers play in public safety. There are many reasons why greater State Trooper coverage is an important factor in improving public safety, but I will focus on just one reason today: **more State Troopers** will result in **less impaired and distracted driving**.

Recent Oregon traffic safety statistics are troubling. I have been a certified Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) for over 10 years and get called out more now than ever for Drug impaired driving crashes and arrests.

In the last year alone, traffic fatalities **increased by about 25%** - and **Impaired driving** is the **leading cause** of fatal and serious injury crashes on Oregon's roadways. **Over half** of those crashes occur on State highways.

Evidence from the CDC and from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are clear on how to **reduce impaired driving**: more State Troopers Patrolling and enforcing laws on Oregon highways help prevent drivers – especially younger drivers – from driving while impaired or distracted.

Investing more resources in State Troopers will save money by preventing traffic accidents and will **SAVE LIVES**.

But, in every corner of Oregon Today, there are still hundreds of miles of highways without any OSP coverage. We are spread very thin and are ranked second lowest on the United States for the number of patrol

officers per 100,000 population statewide (police departments, sheriffs, and state patrol). Oregon's current population is over 4 million with 458 total sworn Patrol Division Positions. In 1969, there were 412 total sworn Patrol Division positions with an Oregon population of just over 2 million. The demand for Patrol Troopers continues to increase due to the growth in population and corresponding increase in vehicle miles traveled. With drugs now decriminalized in the state of Oregon and impaired driving on the rise, our Patrol division is lacking the capacity to effectively patrol all of Oregon's highways.

No OSP office in the state currently has 24/7 staffing. I personally have been called out in the middle of the night, and on days off, to help cover fatal and serious injury crashes on both major and rural highways because of limited staffing. We are delivering more death notifications than I recall ever having to do in the past. My goal at the end of every shift is to safely go home to my family, and I want to see that for other drivers and families as well.

I request that you increase our state's investment in Oregon State Police for next biennium – and that you pass Senate Bill 211 to make clear that we must restore 24/7 trooper coverage on our highways.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your commitment to improving our state's investment in State Troopers.