



To: Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Lee Erickson, SEIU 503, ODOT 730 President

Date: 2/25/25

RE: SEIU 503 supports SB 711

Dear Chair McLain, Chair Gorsek, Vice Chair Boshart Davis, Vice Chair Starr and members of the committee,

My name is Lee Erickson, and I'm a proud member of SEIU 503 and president of the ODOT sub local 730, representing over 2,500 workers at ODOT. I'm writing in support of SB 711 to prioritize the safety of the workforce out there in element building and maintaining our infrastructure.

I join the chorus of unions – such as the Ironworkers, AFSCME, IUPAT, Oregon AFL-CIO – to voice my support for improved safety on the job. If passed, SB 711 would establish a highway worker photo radar program and operate photo radar units within an active highway work zone on state highways. The photo radar units may only be operated in the area within the highway work zone when highway workers are present. A sign must be posted within one mile of the location of the photo radar unit announcing the use of the photo radar.

Here are the facts about work zone incidents from a 2022 report. In Oregon, there were over 350 crashes in a work zone. Of those crashes, 226 were non-fatal injury crashes, 34 were serious injury crashes, and 7 were fatal. These figures alone do not account for the near misses or the constant danger that workers are in despite wearing high-vis gear or posting signage. Even with our best efforts to mitigate the risks, mother nature also throws a lot at us. Extreme weather, like fog, mist, heavy rain, snow, or wildfire smoke, makes it difficult for us to be seen out in the road. Posting signage ahead will notify drivers of the presence of crews down the road.

Radar speed enforcement can save lives. I was hit by a careless driver on 1/1/24 while parked waiting for a tow truck on a freeway off ramp in Portland. I sustained injuries including a serious head injury that lingered for several months with time off from work for care. It affected my memory which took time to heal. The ODOT truck I was driving sustained \$47,000 and some change in damage to repair. All of it could have been avoided had the driver who hit was not a distracted driver.

Another ODOT employee was struck in 2029 by a reckless driver and lost his leg at his hip. He nearly died in the OR due to blood loss. His career with working in the field came to an abrupt end. He now drives a desk at one of our offices. These are just 2 examples of how distracted drivers changed the lives of ODOT workers forever.

I believe this bill is a step in the right direction for work zone safety. I, along with the men and women out there, don't want to be another headline: "ODOT crew struck by driver" or "highway construction worker struck by speeding vehicle." At the end of the day, I want to go home to my family. All roadside workers are spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings or friends to someone, and we all deserve to get home safely at the end of our shift.

By voting AYE on SB 711, the State of Oregon moves in the right direction for work zone safety and holding drivers accountable.

Thank you for reading,

Lee Erickson,

ODOT 730 President