

## Testimony in Support of SB 596 4.8.25

**Chair Manning, Vice Chair Thatcher, and esteemed members of the committee,**

For the record, my name is Aiden Dopson. I am here today with the office of Senator Wlnsvey Campos to testify in strong support of **SB 596**, a bill that would allow eligible Oregon veterans to request a waiver for the cost of a vanity Veterans Recognition License Plate.

Our office believes Oregon has a responsibility to truly honor its veterans. Part of that responsibility involves covering the costs associated with issuing these plates, ensuring that no veteran is excluded from receiving this well-deserved recognition due to financial limitations—this is the impetus behind SB 596. Senator Campos testified before this committee in support of this bill back in February. She sends her apologies, as she is currently presiding over a work session in her committee. I am here today to update you on the work being done on the bill since the first public hearing in February.

Following SB 596's first hearing, we received thoughtful feedback from Chair Manning and committee members regarding the impacts these dollars make in the lives of Oregon veterans, and illuminated potential ways to strengthen the bill. In the weeks leading up to the work session, our office engaged in numerous conversations with stakeholders and agencies, which culminated in the -1 amendment before you today. **The -1 amendment** scales the bill's eligibility to veterans with a disability rating of at least 50 percent. In working with stakeholders to minimize fiscal impacts, we received a revised \$20,000 fiscal from ODOT today— a fraction of the preliminary fiscal we had gotten from our agencies.

In the end, Senator Campos brought this bill because it aligns with Oregon's duty to honor our veterans in ways that go beyond words. It is a small but significant step toward removing the financial barriers to recognition that some veterans face. By expanding the surcharge waiver eligibility, we make it easier for more veterans to proudly display their service to our state and country without the added burden of an unnecessary fee.

We greatly appreciate Senator Manning, ODOT, and ODVA for their willingness to engage in these conversations and get this bill to a place that was more workable for everyone. We are especially grateful to RJ Navarro, policy analyst for the Veterans Caucus, for working with us and ensuring that veterans were centered throughout this process.

With this bill, we believe we have the opportunity to do something very positive for this state, and give back to a group of Oregonians that have given us so much. Thank you for your time and consideration—I urge you to support **Senate Bill 596**.

Thank you,

Aiden Dopson

Office of State Senator Wlnsvey Campos