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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

My family's immigrant story — and why this bill betrays it

In 1925 my lolo (grandfather) stepped off a ship from the Philippines and found in Oregon what every new arrival hopes for: the freedom to work hard, save a few dollars, and drive his first second-hand Model T up the Willamette Valley. A century later, HB 2025 would slam the door he walked through by adding 12 cents to every gallon of gas next year—pushing Oregon's tax toward the levels of California and Washington

- A textbook example of a regressive tax

National research is crystal-clear: flat commodity taxes like fuel surcharges force low-income households to pay a bigger share of their earnings than the wealthy
rand.org

. HB 2025 pulls dollars out of the pockets of:

Minority shift-workers commuting before dawn when transit doesn't run.

Rural families who drive 30–50 miles for groceries or medical care.

Gig-economy drivers—often immigrants—whose livelihoods depend on every mile.

- Oregon is already in the top tier for gas taxes

At 40 ¢/gal we sit in the nation's top-ten. HB 2025's hike to roughly 52 ¢/gal would catapult working-class Oregonians toward the most expensive pumps west of the Rockies

- Real-world cost to “the least of us”

An average driver logging 11,000 miles a year in a 25 MPG sedan would burn ~440 gallons. The extra 12 ¢ adds ~\$53 per year—before inflation, payroll-tax hikes, or the coming mileage fee. For a single mom earning \$34k, that's the monthly power bill.

- Trump-era context proves lower prices are possible

Many states saw pump prices hover near \$2/gal in late 2020—showing that restraint, not automatic hikes, is achievable when policymakers make energy affordability a priority.

- “Progressive” intent, regressive outcome

HB 2025 funds well-meaning programs, yet drains the very workers those programs claim to lift. Every new fee further entrenches the cycle:

Higher taxes ? higher cost of living ? more demand for state assistance ? higher taxes again.

- A super-majority shouldn't silence the working minority

Democrats hold every lever in Salem. Republicans cannot shield the dock worker, the farm-hand, or the childcare provider from this tax spiral. If equity is truly the North Star, majority leaders must rise above party lines and vote no.

- Better paths forward

Audit & reform ODOT first (required in HB 2025 but not tied to revenue triggers) before digging a deeper hole.

Expand means-tested transit and EV incentives paid from existing general-fund surpluses, not new gas levies.

Address root poverty drivers—broken schools, housing shortages, addiction—rather than taxing commuters to fund patches.

- Closing plea

My lolo's dream was never government dependency; it was dignity through hard work. Please honor that legacy—and the hopes of today's immigrants, refugees, and blue-collar Oregonians—by rejecting HB 2025. There are ways to build roads without breaking the backs of the people who drive on them.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Ocupe

Grandson of a Filipino immigrant, small-business owner, and Oregon voter