

Submitter: Melissa Hamilton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1601

Dear Chair Girod, Chair Nosse, and members of the committee,

I oppose the cuts to our transportation program funding. Oregon should not balance its books at the expense of schoolchildren, disabled folks, or communities already facing rising costs, soaring unemployment, and climate impacts.

Safety is not negotiable. The state is taking \$17 million from Safe Routes to School and \$8 million from Oregon Community Paths. That is more than 60% of both programs' budgets. This funding builds the crossings, sidewalks, and paths that allow children to get to class without risking their lives. These programs were built with broad support because they work. They reduce pollution, lower household costs, and keep rural communities connected to the rest of the state. Cutting programs that increase affordability for Oregonians struggling to make ends meet is not the answer. The proposed budget cuts are not a long-term, sustainable solution. When budgets get tight, there is always pressure to raid smaller programs because they look like easy targets. But focusing on these line items is like stepping over dollars to pick up dimes. The immediate savings are tiny, but they create much higher costs later.