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Making roadways safer for all Oregonians

April 3, 2017

Honorable Representative Paul Holvey
Chair, House Business and Labor Committee

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janelle Lawrence, and I am the Executive Director of Oregon Impact, Oregon's largest organization dedicated to preventing drinking and distracted driving. Oregon Impact was once known as the Clackamas County DUII Impact Panel, Oregon Impact became a non-profit in 1998 to expand efforts to increase safe driving by reducing driving under the influence from a primarily intervention focus to an emphasis on prevention. The Impact Panel started in 1987 following approval by the Oregon Legislature of a law allowing judges to require individuals convicted for driving while intoxicated to attend a presentation by victims of crashes caused by offenders as a condition of probation or diversion. Since then it has become our mission to prevent drivers from ever getting to a panel before being more aware of the risks of driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or prescription medication and the impact that has on families, children and the community. I am here to express my strong support for HB 3246, and I strongly urge the committee to support the bill and send to the floor for a vote.

Simply put, I know from my 7 years of experience as the Executive Director of Oregon Impact that expanding ride sharing services like Uber and Lyft to all of Oregon will benefit all who use our state's roadways every day. There are many reasons for this including less congestion, cleaner air, and an improvement to our local economy. But from my perspective Uber and Lyft offer an even greater service. They help and make it easier for more people make the responsible choice to not drink and drive. And for those who have made the unfortunate choice to drink and get behind the wheel, ride sharing services is something we use every day to assist Oregonians that are on diversion to get their life back on track.

The ability to hail an Uber so easily allows those on diversion to continue to work, make their court appointments and continue to participate in their families lives for the next year while their license is suspended. We have seen a significant decrease in the number of people in diversion who choose to drive illegally thanks to Uber.

When we provide education on impaired and distracted driving, Uber is part of our toolkit. We know that once you consume that first drink your brain simply can't make a clear decision on your ability to drive. Uber and Lyft help people plan - from the beginning of the evening out - to be safe and not make the poor decision to drink and drive. This simply wasn't the case when taxis were the only option in Portland. The limited number of taxis and the long waits did not make it a viable solution and led to many people taking the unfortunate rise to drink and drive.

I see the results everyday of making one poor decision to drink and get behind the wheel. I urge you to support HB 3246, and reject any proposal intended to damage the ride sharing industry, to expand ride sharing services to the entire state so that all Oregonians have a better chance to arrive home safely and keep their life on track. There is no doubt that passage of HB 3246 will save lives.

Safe Travels,

Janelle Lawrence