



Testimony in Support of the Equal Access to Roads Act

**Submitted by: Veronica Leonard, Board Member
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon**

April 16, 2019

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Veronica Leonard

Re: House Bill 2015: Equal Access to Roads Act

Chairs Beyer, McKeown and Members of the Committee:

As advocates for reproductive justice, NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon understands the importance of ensuring that all Oregonians - regardless of their circumstances - have the tools to be able to make their own personal healthcare decisions. On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, I respectfully request that the committee pass H.B. 2015, the Equal Access to Roads Act.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon is dedicated to developing and sustaining a constituency that uses the political process to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, bearing healthy children, and choosing legal abortion.

Reproductive justice is inherently connected to access to reliable and safe transportation. When women have the ability to drive, they have more control over their own reproductive healthcare. Oregon has long been a leader in increasing access to the full range of reproductive choices and options for immigrant women, regardless of their citizenship status, but without the ability to drive, reproductive healthcare will still be out of reach for many.

In my role as Director of Youth Education and Wellness at Latino Network, I have seen firsthand how the lack of safe transportation options stifles the ability of young Latinx Oregonians to achieve their educational goals. When parents cannot access a license to drive, the options for getting to school become driving without a license and risking arrest and deportation, not driving and impacting the ability of their children to go to school and participate in other activities that will enhance their educational experience, or asking their adolescent children with driver's licenses to transport their younger siblings to school thus burdening them with an undue responsibility for their age. This increases the rate of chronic absenteeism and disengagement from school, and decreases graduation rates, ultimately diminishing access to economic opportunities to provide for themselves and their loved ones.

When Oregonians have the freedom and security to drive, they are able to support their families and go to school, the doctor, and the grocery store—core necessities to living a healthy life. On average, women take more trips than men per day in the car, and women often end up in caretaking roles that include things like going grocery shopping, picking up kids from school, taking a family member to a doctor’s appointment, or picking up a prescription. Many of these caregiving tasks require getting in a car.

Lack of access to a driver’s license puts women more at risk for contact with the police because they are in the car more often. Additionally, being unable to produce a driver’s license during a traffic stop is increasingly leading immigrants, who otherwise have no criminal records, to be flagged for deportation.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon supports H.B. 2015, as an important step towards safety and equality for all, and we respectfully urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Veronica Leonard
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon Foundation Board Member
Director, Youth Education and Wellness at Latino Network