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NEWS RELEASE

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SENATE APPROVES FRITZ-FAIRCHILD ACT FAVORING CABLE BARRIERS TO PREVENT CROSSOVER CRASHES

(SALEM) -- The Oregon Senate voted 28-1 Monday in favor of a measure that will help prevent deadly cross-over accident on Oregon's interstate highways and save lives.

Senate Bill 921 directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to complete installation of life-saving median barriers on interstate highways where the space between opposing lanes of traffic measures 100 feet or less.

The measure is known as the Fritz-Fairchild Act in memory of Dr. Steven Fritz and Cary Fairchild, both employees of the Oregon State Hospital in Salem, who were killed in cross-over crash while commuting to work on September 24, 2014.

"Cary and Steven devoted their lives to changing and, in many cases, saving the lives of others," said Senator Rod Monroe, D-Portland, a chief sponsor of the bill. "This bill will honor their memory by saving even more lives."

"Today, the Oregon Senate took an important step forward to make highways throughout the state safer and did so in the spirit of bipartisanship. It means a great deal to my family knowing other families in Oregon will not have to endure a similar tragedy," said Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, widow of Steven Fritz.

Dr. Fritz and Fairchild were killed when vehicle going north on I-5 crossed an open median and struck their southbound car. A median barrier has since been installed in that spot, but there are many areas across Oregon that are unprotected.

“On September 24, we lost two remarkable Oregonians in a tragic crash,” said Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem-Gervais/Woodburn). “We know cable barriers work. We know they save lives. This legislation will save lives in the future.”

In February 2000, ODOT reported that the three-cable barrier installed along I-5 between Salem and Wilsonville resulted in a decrease in both cross-over fatalities and crash-related costs. Over the following three-year period, 22 miles of cable were installed. In the year and a half after the installation, there were zero cross-over crashes.

The areas of the state lacking these critical barriers are predominately in rural Oregon: South on I-5 and East on I-84. The installations are projected to be completed by December 21, 2021.

“This measure honors the memory of two special people and will make our highways safer in rural Oregon,” said Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena).

SB 921 now heads to the Oregon House or Representatives for consideration.