



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 18, 2020

Dear Chief Clerk Tim Sekerak:

I wish to submit the following vote explanation for House Bill 4097.

I appreciate Rep. Hernandez bringing this bill forward. I understand that it comes out of a genuine concern for implicit bias in policing and a desire to make mass transit welcoming for everyone. I voted no for two reasons – 1) the bill addresses a symptom, not the source, of the problem; and 2) it infringes on the authority of transit districts to make decisions about fares and fare enforcement at their level.

I very much doubt that any police officer in Oregon wakes up in the morning with the intent to discriminate. Unfortunately, this bill assumes that police operate in a biased manner without providing them with the data necessary to correct that bias. We see positive results when police track their perception of the race of the people they stop in the course of their duties and are provided with feedback regarding how their practices compare with the demographics of their communities. Instead of taking away a policing tool under the theory that it is used in a biased way, a better approach is to expand data-gathering and feedback tools to address implicit bias directly, rather than through its (presumed) expression. I strongly support gathering this data and using it appropriately.

Secondarily, I am concerned that this bill limits transit districts' ability to determine their own fare policies. I appreciate that there is an ongoing discussion about fareless mass transit. Currently, in LTD, fares pay about half of the actual cost of providing the service. Going fareless would either require an effective doubling of other revenue sources or cuts of more than 50% in service. Fare enforcement is directly related to these policies and should be decided by the local transit boards. They are both closer to their constituents and better informed regarding the specifics of their districts than we are.

In light of these objections, I voted no on the bill. I look forward to working with Rep. Hernandez on future proposals to address implicit bias.

Sincerely,

Representative Marty Wilde

