

**Legislative Hearing Bill #5506, #5507
Friday, May 24, 2013**

Celeste Hill-Thomas

Hello Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Chair Girod and members of the Committee. I am Celeste Hill-Thomas, Executive Director of the Mid-Columbia Health Foundation (MCHF), which is the fundraising entity of Mid-Columbia Medical Center. We are located at 1700 E. 19th Street in The Dalles, Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Our request today is for \$2.5 million in public funding support for our \$55 million capital construction project.

The Mid-Columbia Health Foundation was founded in 1983 as a support to Mid-Columbia Medical Center. The role of the Foundation is more than just an income stream, but the liaison to the community. Our vision of a Healthy Community began with a market research and feasibility study with key stakeholders to determine if the community vision was appropriate for MCMC and MCHF. From a broad prospective, this campaign empowered both the Medical Center and Health Foundation to partner at a strategic level in addressing three major challenges in our community. Facing these challenges collaborately proved to be transformational; leaving us with enhanced medical capability, increase community participation and improved healthcare access and delivery for a more stable future. From this vision, we have been successful in partnering with the community and several regional foundations with completion of our most recent campaign to digitize our diagnostic imaging department. Other accomplishments include partnership with Oregon Health Science University resulting in establishment of local cardiology and orthopedics practices; establishment of a Certified Breast Care Center; establishment of the Breast Health for Strong Families Program in partnership with Susan G. Komen, Meyer Memorial Trust and La Clinica del Carino.

Mid-Columbia Medical Center is located in the rural county of Wasco in The Dalles, Oregon and supports a service area for six legislative districts. Total population in our service area is approximately 65,000 people in rural Oregon. The majority of MCMC employees reside in Wasco County, which has a total employed workforce of 11,158 people. Of that, Mid-Columbia Medical Center employs 900 which equals 8% of the total employed workforce and provides 18% of the total payroll dollars. Mid-Columbia Medical Center is the largest employer in Wasco County.

Our request for public funding will be matched by private individual and foundations. The best examples of healthcare include, at their core, strategic philanthropic support. This support allows improved service delivery by creating a margin of excellence through community partnership. The impact of this model transcends finances. We are in the second round of interviews on a current

feasibility study with a goal of \$5 million for the \$55 million Hospital expansion project. We're proud to tell you that we have identified up to \$2.5 million in funds from prospective donors who stand ready to match the investment we are asking you to make in support of our goal.

Dr. Paula Lee Valkov

Thank you Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Chair Girod and members of the Committee. I am Dr. Paula Lee-Valkov, a board certified radiologist and Board Chair of the Mid-Columbia Health Foundation. As a practicing radiologist at Mid-Columbia Medical Center, I would like to bring attention to a substantial problem in rural healthcare that is a constant challenge for us at Mid-Columbia Medical Center: 'Recruitment and Retention' of professional medical staff.

On a personal note, I was born in Trinidad and was privileged to receive my education at MIT and Baylor College of Medicine. My husband and I have chosen to live in the Gorge to support my career as a medical professional at MCMC. For the last seven years, I have been involved in the daily delivery of medical services in a rural healthcare setting. My patients come from a 125 mile radius, ranging from Hood River to as far east as Fossil, drawing from a patient population significantly larger than the local population of The Dalles of approximately 65,000 people. 64% of my patients are underserved and/or living in poverty.

During the course of my career at MCMC, we have emerged from a 'film-based' department and have become "fully digital". Despite the fact that we are a relatively small rural community hospital, we have managed to achieve national standards of imaging with respect to areas such as digital mammography. The reason we have been able to do that is because we have strong local philanthropy which we have fully leveraged and because we are very judicious in how we allocate the philanthropic funds we raise. We recently raised \$2.1 million in local and regional philanthropy to update technology to bring our rural hospital current and our services competitive; in providing important community based healthcare to our regional constituents.

We come to you to ask for the necessary funds to develop critical areas. Because of our record of using funds to truly improve the standard of healthcare in a way that is seen by the people and felt by the people, the funds that you grant us will be seen and felt by the patients of rural Eastern Oregon.

We must respond to building improvements required by fire code, new and improved technology, as well as creating a professional rural hospital environment that will greatly assist in the recruitment and retention of medical professionals.

In closing, Mid-Columbia Medical Center has 75 full-time medical doctors and 25 mid-level providers (such as PAs and nurse practitioners). At least half of these

individuals have relocated from outside of the area and now call The Dalles “home”. We are proud of MCMC, our medical staff and employees and the growing community that we serve now and in the future.

Thank you Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Chair Girod and members of the Committee.

Bob Bailey

Thank you Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Chair Girod and members of the Committee, I am Bob Bailey, founding and current member of the Mid-Columbia Health Foundation Board. I am also a Chair and Board Member for the Healthcare of the Mid-Columbia Region and a Board Member of Mid-Columbia Medical Center Board of Trustees. As a family orchardist, The Dalles is “my” community and Mid-Columbia Medical Center is “my” hospital. My family and I are proud supporters to this Campaign. As six figure donors, we recognize the value of leveraging support.

I am here before you today to show my support for our public funding request that includes Mid-Columbia Medical Center. This request is a solid return on investment for the Citizens of Oregon in leveraging their support in completing our \$55 million building campaign with upgrades and expansion. These improvements will grow and reshape our service delivery as an essential regional provider of our rural health care model.

My board experience to MCMC and MCHF gives me a unique understanding of the needs of this rural healthcare model. MCMC is established as a non-profit hospital and does not receive any government subsidy in the delivery of rural healthcare services. If we are unable to sustain this local rural model then we will no longer remain one of the State of Oregon’s last remaining community hospitals.

Co-Chairs and members of the Committee, we can’t imagine our Mid-Columbia Medical Center healthcare decisions, being made by a corporation in Texas or some other far removed corporate healthcare environment.

That said, it makes sense, good stewardship and solid return on investment, in supporting our rural MCMC healthcare brand. Already, we have taken a proactive approach in creating a working relationship with Oregon Health Sciences University. The importance and emphasis on this relationship goes well beyond my two minutes here. Please know that OHSU and MCMC are working together to create and support a lasting partnership that truly benefits the practice of our rural healthcare services to The Dalles and surrounding Columbia Gorge communities.

As I introduce you to Duane Francis, President and CEO of MCMC, it is important to restate the point that this request to you leverages the future of our Mid-Columbia Medical Center model as a continued viable provider of rural

healthcare services. We believe that this request and the philanthropic match from the local area and surrounding region is a solid investment for you to make for the citizens that we also serve.

On behalf of our Columbia Gorge community and the open door to the regional community that we serve, I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of our request. Thank you.

Duane Francis

Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Chair Girod and members of the Committee. What we are talking about here is the long-term viability of a nationally-recognized healthcare model that serves an important region of rural Oregon. We are a regional referral center that serves up to five counties in Oregon including Wasco, Sherman, Hood River, Gilliam and Morrow.

Our partnership with Oregon Health Sciences University, our proven and successful strategies to improve access and delivery, and our involvement of strategic philanthropy at our core make us a model for other rural counties.

The challenge we face is a 53-year old facility that can no longer meet the needs of the community. We are very proud of how we have stewarded this resource over the years and kept ourselves effective and competitive. Technology upgrades have extended the life of the facility. But we are at a clear crossroads.

Our solution is to invest in this facility wisely; repurposing our current structure for medical office use, and adding to it new medical space that allows for the technologies and efficiencies that are not possible in our existing footprint.

The result is a \$55 million investment in a \$30 million asset. Our plan would not result in any demolition of our campus but a pure addition and enhancement of what we already have.

Our financing plan for this project includes a highly leveraged investment. Our planning for modernizations is comprehensive and thorough; based on years of due diligence and informed by national best practices from highly credible consultants.

Our community meanwhile is staged and prepared to fully match this timely public investment. The impact of this goes beyond a one-time infusion of philanthropy. Our track record is one of shepherding sustained support that has the potential to benefit us for decades to come.

And so it is on behalf of those we currently serve, as well as the generations of Oregonians to follow, that I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today and if you have any questions for us we would be happy to answer them.