

Chairman Barnhart, Members of the Committee:

I serve as the Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Warrenton where the Astoria-Warrenton Regional Airport (KAST) is located. Our airport is a vital and necessary lifeline for our city. While we no longer have commercial air service, we do have unique challenges that without raising the revenues available to our airport infrastructure, I fear will leave my citizens in peril.

Warrenton is located between the Pacific Ocean and Columbia River, north of Seaside and west of Astoria. My community is literally on the farthest NW corner of the state and is geographically isolated. We rely on the airport to base our Lifeflight service, AmeriFlight deliveries for UPS, spotting planes for our large commercial fishing fleet, and a growing Coast Guard Sector Columbia River and Air Base. We need air services to connect our citizens to urgent medical care, commerce and rescue services. These services require a well maintained, safe airport infrastructure. Of course, this requires money.

When the economy recesses, rural areas are the first to hurt and most often the last to recover. This doesn't make our infrastructure less important, if anything it highlights the need for dedicating funds to maintain it more salient. In order to recover, we need our infrastructure maintained, in place and ready for new business. The City of Warrenton has a permanent property tax rate of 1.67 per \$1,000. The Port of Astoria, who owns the airport, has a tax rate that is a fraction of that. We cannot change our tax rates and raising funds on our own is much more difficult than in urban areas with a larger tax base and higher tax rates. We need dedicated funds to assist us in getting matches for grants and maintaining what we have during times of hardship.

In my time as a public official, I have rarely seen a user group asked to be taxed more. However, the situation with Oregon's airports infrastructure is at a critical juncture. If we do not dedicate investments to improve or maintain it, we will lose it. HB 2075 is, in my opinion, a modest and workable start to providing a sustainable means to preserve our existing airport infrastructure around the state. I ask you to please vote yes on this bill.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Balensifer III
M. Pro Tem
City of Warrenton