

Governor Kate Brown
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, Room 254
Salem, OR 97301

Senate President Peter Courtney
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, S-201
Salem, OR 97301

House Speaker Tina Kotek
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, Room 269
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4146

Dear Governor Brown, President Courtney, Speaker Kotek, and Members of the Legislature:

I recently learned that my son Ashton was preparing a letter in support of the upcoming legislation impacting the 2021 IAAF World Championships and felt compelled to express my thoughts as well. As the mother of someone whose life has been changed by the experiences track & field has afforded him, I think of this sport in much bigger terms than others may. With a few amazing years behind us and Ashton preparing for his second Olympic bid, these days we talk more about how we want to change lives through track than we do about his own achievements within it. This event has the potential to be one of those life-changing experiences for thousands of people – young and old – around the state of Oregon.

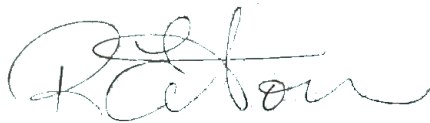
When it was announced that Eugene would be the host of the 2021 World Championships in track & field I was struck by the significance of this opportunity. My first thoughts turned toward the tremendous responsibility that has been entrusted to us as Oregonians. The legacy that was established so many years ago – that of Bill Bowerman and of Pre and of Hayward Field – that legacy is now ours to protect. Rich traditions like this do not live on without the communities in which they are rooted continuing to nurture and feed them. We are the caretakers of this treasure. We are responsible for continuing to tell the story of what happened here in the past and for giving our young people something to set their sights on in the future. It is one thing to talk about the legends who have graced the track at University of Oregon, it is quite another to give our kids the chance to see and feel it for themselves. Witnessing events like this gives life to dreams. I know, I have looked into the eyes of my own son and seen it happen.

With all of the negative things happening around the world, all of the emphasis on what divides us, we have an opportunity to support a unique event that unites us: sport, done as only we can. Coaches from Beaverton to Bangladesh are preaching the same messages of discipline, determination and perseverance to their athletes as they prepare. These are required elements in the formula for success in anything in life. In sport we are all more alike than we are different. The World Championships will be our peaceful demonstration, our defiance of the notion that we must be separated by color, class, creed or religion. Through this – the most accessible sport in the world – we have a chance to put Oregon on a grand stage and to declare that regardless of national origin these athletes are brothers and sisters in the common pursuit excellence. The millions of us watching around the world are one community gathered to celebrate each of them in both victory and defeat.

As I consider our legacy I realize that it does not belong to us alone. I have traveled the world cheering on Ashton and his wife Brianne and each place I go, many of the athletes I encounter speak of Hayward field with a kind of awe and reverence usually reserved for the great wonders of the world. You see, to them it is one. Athletes and fans of this sport have either been to Hayward Field or they have dreamt of coming. Most tracks are, by necessity, essentially the same. But let me tell you something, Hayward Field is different. As citizens of Oregon we are the stewards of this legacy and, as we would with any cultural treasure, we are called upon to share it. The 2021 World Championships is our opportunity to do just that. The world wants to come here, let us extend a gracious hand.

Investing in the 2021 World Championships is an opportunity to unite under the equalizing banner of sport, to build on and share the legacy we have inherited, and to inspire young people to shoot for the stars. As an Oregonian and as a mother who has watched her child changed by opportunities such as the one we hold in our hands, I strongly encourage you to support the proposed legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roz Eaton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Roz Eaton