

SB 5505 - Roseburg Public Schools Testimony in Support of Seismic Grants

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about the need to continue support for the seismic rehabilitation grant program. Roseburg Public Schools have received 5 seismic grants to date totaling \$6,858,958. We received a grant in the first round to address serious structural issues in our high school gymnasium, we will begin construction on improvements to Green Elementary this summer and we will begin construction on improvements at Fullerton IV Elementary, Hucrest Elementary, and Melrose Elementary in the summer of 2018.

With these grant funds, the areas of most importance will be reinforced and we will be leaps and bounds ahead of where we are now in terms of seismic stability. Yes, the grants help us pay for items like roof resurfacing that would have had to be paid somehow from the district's budget-at the cost of other educational programs, but more importantly **the grants give us the opportunity to create seismic stability where we would not have had the funds to do that.** Additionally, the improvements in the gymnasium have opened up another large public space that can be used as a community shelter by the Red Cross and other agencies in the event of a Cascadia Subduction Zone Event.

Every year a school district must prioritize how it will expend limited public dollars. And the first priority has to be support of children in classrooms. No district wants to make the recommendation to cut teachers or funds for computers so they can budget for seismic rehabilitation. Few parents or community members would agree with the district making such spending a priority at the expense of classroom support. However the need for seismically structurally sound buildings is real and we are pleased to have been able to make those changes and to be able to make those changes in other buildings.

Improvements to all of our buildings reflect better understanding of risks than when the buildings were originally constructed. While I could detail those I am going to focus on our completed project. The roof on our high school gym was originally built in the 1950s. The original roof support structure used a bow string truss system using timber trusses and steel cables. This type of roof design is no longer used and is considered an inferior method of support. Prior to replacement in 2016 our gym roof represented a serious safety concern. Over the last eight years the district has had to install stabilizing plates on two trusses that developed serious cracks. We were at a point where we were having an engineer come in every few months to check for additional breakdowns in the support structure, and had made plans in place to quickly shut down the gym if necessary (we knew we had yet another truss that had developed serious structural cracks). Engineers had indicated that the roof would only bear a snow load of a half inch and that beyond that point would be in danger of collapsing. An experience that occurred in other districts this past winter. The district had money set aside to patch the bad truss, but we were having discussions around at what point was it more fiscally prudent to **borrow funds** and just replace the failing roof. The grant enabled us to replace the entire roof structure. Most importantly, **the grant allowed us to not only replace the aging, deteriorated roof structure, it allowed us to make seismic upgrades.** The gym is now a much safer place to be in the event of an earthquake. **Those seismic upgrades would not have happened without this grant opportunity.**

The state agency in charge of this program, Business Oregon, has been an excellent partner in this process. Their help has been invaluable in our application and implementation of the grants. As legislators and as educators how we spend public money is often questioned. This is an instance where we have gotten something right and I strongly encourage you to continue support of this program.

Respectfully,

Gerry C. Washburn, Ed.D.

Superintendent, Roseburg Public Schools