



Subject: SB5505-Chemeketa Agricultural Complex

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Dear Members of the Ways and Means Capital Construction Committee:

Marion-Polk Food Share is proud to support Chemeketa Community College's request to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for an Agriculture/Horticulture Complex on the Salem campus.

The purpose of the complex is to provide educational, workforce training and community support services for students and community members and to respond to the growing needs of the greater agricultural community of the Willamette Valley. The Food Share strongly supports this work and recognizes the need for a centralized location for service partners.

As the regional food bank serving Marion & Polk Counties, we have ongoing intersection with agriculture and the farming community. We partner with many local farmers and gardeners, manage a network of community gardens, and run the Youth Farm, a farm-based work experience program for young adults. The Youth Farm is now located on the Chemeketa Salem campus. We work closely with Chemeketa and OSU Extension to provide farm and garden-based services that increase food security and reduce hunger.

The Food Share is very interested in utilizing space in this potential, new facility. Service quality and cohesion amongst partners will increase with shared educational space and offering a "one-stop shop" for the community. We're excited about the educational opportunities that will arise from such collaboration. This facility is a needed community resource. As the top agricultural producing county in the state, we need a cutting-edge hub for local food and farming programs. It will only lead to bigger and better things for the Mid-Valley. Please join us supporting this important project.

Sincerely,

Rick Gaupo  
President & CEO  
Marion-Polk Food Share