

May 10, 2017

To: Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

From: Carrie E. Lewis, President/CEO Oregon Coast Aquarium

Submitted to: jwmcc.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re **SB 5505** In support of: Oregon Coast Community College, Lincoln County Oregon, Workforce Education and Resiliency Center, \$8 million Article XI-G State Bonding (to be matched dollar for dollar by local resources).

Dear Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is in full support of Oregon Coast Community College's planned new Workforce Education and Resiliency Center at their Newport campus.

The Oregon Coast Aquarium was founded in 1984 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located on 19 acres on the Yaquina Bay estuary in Newport, Oregon. It was intended to draw tourism, facilitate oceanic research and education, and bring economic prosperity to the community. Since opening in 1992, it has welcomed more than 14 million visitors from around the world. The Aquarium is frequently rated by travel writers as one of the top ten aquariums in the U.S. because of its naturalistic marine life exhibits, educational programming, and strong sense of place on the Pacific Ocean. It is the only aquarium in Oregon accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), maintaining this designation since 2001. The Oregon Coast Aquarium and the Oregon Coast Community College have a unique partnership in relation to the Aquarium Science field and work together to ensure students are well equipped with appropriate curricula and work experience in their chosen field.

OCCC's new Workforce Education building will help to address critical workforce gaps in Lincoln County and the surrounding region. Envisioned career focused education programs for new facility align well with Lincoln County workforce gaps in living wage jobs essential to the economic and civic vitality of our region. These programs include Emergency Preparation & Management; Maritime Technicians; Applied Technology (Trades); and P-12 Teacher Education.

We are also strongly in support of the secondary role of the building, to serve as a resiliency and recovery center for Lincoln County south of the Yaquina bridge in the event of a catastrophic event. The building itself, along with the trained professionals and students that may be at the college at the time of an event, could be essential in immediate and longer term recovery. This is the type of visionary and collaborative thinking envisioned in the Oregon Resilience Plan (2013), which states *planning for reconstruction and recovery must be done now to provide a strategic vision for restoring the economy and livability of the Oregon coast.*

We appreciate your efforts toward this endeavor

Sincerely,

Carrie E. Lewis, President/CEO Oregon Coast Aquarium



"We create unique and engaging experiences that connect you to the Oregon coast and inspire ocean conservation."

www.aquarium.org | oceanscape.aquarium.org

