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July 10, 2020

Dear Co-Chairs Courtney and Kotek, and Members of the Legislative Emergency Board,

Congress included \$400 million in the CARES Act dedicated to helping states prepare for the 2020 presidential election. Oregon's share is more than \$5.6 million that could be drawn down to help us run a successful election. CARES Act funding for elections will enable Oregon counties to better, more fully, more efficiently, and more safely serve Oregon voters in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oregon is already on a better footing in elections administration than many states because we vote by mail. But we are still challenged by this pandemic. Many indoor ballot drop sites were closed during the May election, and will likely be closed again in November. Further, many veteran election board workers are not willing to work during the pandemic due to health concerns and lack of social distancing in the work area, leaving county election offices short staffed on critical processes. With physical distancing and building size constraints, we have fewer personnel to process ballots. Processing times were greater when we had about a 46% turnout in May. They will be substantially longer with an expected 85 to 90% voter turnout in November.

CARES Act funding will make our November election more voter-friendly, safe, secure and efficient. CARES Act funding will allow counties to automate some functions – reducing staff, saving space, and meeting physical distancing requirements. CARES Act funding will also allow upgrades to vote tally systems to significantly speed the processing of ballots and reduce dependence on people. CARES Act funding will increase the availability of safe 24/7 ballot drop sites in light of closed indoor sites. CARES Act funding will help counties increase physical and operational security during this highly scrutinized and contentious November general election.

Counties have identified \$1,716,237 in expenditures to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus for the 2020 November election. This need is critical to implementing changes in advance of the general election timeframe. We are asking your assistance in obtaining these funds as expediently as possible.

Thank you,

Bill Burgess
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