

Bridgeton Neighborhood Assn.

February 18, 2019

City of Fairview

Senate Committee on Environment & Natural Resources

City of Gresham

Oregon State Legislature

City of Portland

900 Court Street NE

Salem, OR 97301

Bureau of Environmental Services

Re: Senate Bill 431

Bureau of Transportation

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

Portland Parks & Recreation

The 27-mile levee system running from N. Portland through Gresham, Fairview, and Troutdale reduces the risk of flooding for thousands of people, while also protecting critical infrastructure, greenspaces, and habitat.

Portland Water Bureau

City of Troutdale

Although the infrastructure is old and in need of major repairs, the drainage districts responsible for maintaining the system have only been able to fund basic operations and maintenance with limited capital improvements for many years. As a result, the system is out of compliance with new federal standards set by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA certification of the levee system has expired, which means that FEMA could revoke accreditation and remap the area as floodplain any time.

Columbia Corridor Association

Columbia Slough Watershed Council

East Columbia Neighborhood Assn.

Federal Emergency Management
Agency

Jubitz Corporation

Metro

Multnomah County

Multnomah County Drainage District

Peninsula Drainage District #1

Peninsula Drainage District #2

Port of Portland

Losing FEMA accreditation of the levee system would mean that landowners behind the levees would no longer be eligible for affordable flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP); mortgage holders would be required to purchase flood insurance at higher rates; the cities and county would have to implement new zoning and building codes to elevate buildings above flood levels; new development in the area would be restricted; existing development would not be able to expand or renovate; and the region would lose access to a significant portion of the undeveloped industrial land.

State of Oregon

As we've worked together to address the challenges associated with the levee system, the partnership has agreed that a new governance structure is needed to ensure flood safety and meet the needs of the system now and in the future. Although it may need some adjustments, Senate Bill 431, creating an Urban Flood Safety & Water Quality District in urban Multnomah County, has been designed to meet long-term flood safety needs while allowing for a more equitable distribution of costs and improved environmental stewardship along the levees and drainage canals in the managed floodplain

Dept. of Environmental Quality

*Dept. of Land Conservation &
Development*

Governor's Regional Solutions Team

US Army Corps of Engineers

We need to move quickly to put this improved governance structure in place so FEMA can see we are making forward progress on our efforts to meet and maintain federal safety standards for levees. It will also put us in a much better position to be able to leverage federal funding for the levee system through a Congressionally-authorized and funded US Army Corps of Engineers feasibility study of the system designated in mid-2018. This three-year study will culminate with the Corps delivering recommendations to Congress, including requests to fund up to 65% of their recommended projects. This won't address everything all at once, but it could dramatically reduce the costs that will have to be borne by Oregonians

The local levee system along the Columbia reduces the risk of flooding for over 7,500 residents; over 2,500 businesses and 59,000 employees, the Portland International Airport, a number of other critical public assets like the Columbia South Shore Wellfield, Oregon's second largest source of drinking water, three interstate highways, over 2,000 acres of parks and natural spaces including critical habitat for the endangered Streak Horned Lark and the protected Western Pond Turtle and Western Painted Turtle, and so much more.

Creating the Urban Flood Safety & Water Quality District is needed to reduce the risk of flooding in an area critical to the region's future and help improve the environment and recreational value of the managed floodplain. There is always some risk with change but doing nothing is a far greater risk to the state, the region, and all the people who rely on the levee system to protect their lives and livelihoods.

Please vote yes on Senate Bill 431.

Thank you,

Levee Ready Columbia Partners



CITY OF GRESHAM

February 15, 2019

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Se. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 431

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee:

The City of Gresham supports SB 431, as an important vehicle to achieving ongoing levee safety, jobs and economic development, and federal recertification. Currently, drainage districts function in our area with the mission of keeping the land behind the levees dry, and facilitating economic development and the critical movement of commerce and people, particularly as it relates to the Portland International Airport and jobs lands that have statewide significance.

These drainage districts, however, were never empowered with the means necessary to provide the daunting maintenance and safety challenges that are presented by the largest river flow in the western United States. With that challenge in mind, and looming federal recertification on the near horizon, we knew that a creative, collaborative, Oregon solution would be required.

SB 431 represents the fruit of that multi-year collaborative effort, which involved many different jurisdictions and a wide variety of stakeholder interests. It has taken an overwhelmingly difficult question -how to achieve recertification and plan for sustainable maintenance and safety upgrades in the future- and achieved a solution that is collaborative and has buy-in from multiple partners. We urge the Committee's favorable consideration and welcome the State's assistance in helping achieve a long-term sustainable future for the Columbia levee system.

Sincerely,

Eric Chambers
Government Relations Director



February 18, 2019

Senate Committee on Environmental & Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 431

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

The City of Fairview strongly supports Senate Bill 431 as the best option to assure current recertification and long term operation and maintenance of the Columbia River levees in the Portland Metro area and urges the legislature to approve it. Fairview has been a partner in the Levee Ready Columbia (LRC) efforts since 2013. For the last two years involvement in these efforts has been a primary Council goal. This January the Council approved a five year Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to participate in the transition to long term levee operation that SB 431 will help create.

The stability and recertification of the levees along Fairview's Columbia River frontage and the river frontage of our neighboring jurisdictions is critical to our residents. Approximately 25% of our population lives in the flood plain and would be directly impacted by failure of the system, loss of flood insurance if recertification is not maintained or experience a financial hardship if an equitable financing solution is not found. Our remaining citizens would also be impacted if the transportation systems, economic value and jobs protected by the levees are negatively affected by the challenges to this levee system.

The Fairview City Council has and will continue to financially contribute to and invest staff resources in achieving the goals of LRC. We release that the partners of LRC need assistance in this endeavor and ask the Legislator to approve SB 431 to help us move into the future and consider other legislation proposed by LCR favorably to bring addition resource toward this issue. We believe that these levees are of statewide value and are asking for the State to join us in our efforts.

Respectively Submitted,

Nolan Young
City Administrator
City of Fairview