



March 13, 2019

House Committee on Veterans & Emergency Preparedness  
Joint Committee on Ways & Means

**RE: Please support and fund HB 2208 – Grants for seismic safety**

On behalf of the more 7,400 supporters of Restore Oregon who are passionate about saving Oregon's irreplaceable historic buildings, I urge you to support and to fund this seismic grant program. The state is long-overdue in addressing the risk of a seismic catastrophe that will not only impact public safety, but would also wipe out our economy and most of the buildings that embody our rich heritage.

Main Street businesses, churches, apartments, theaters, brew pubs, community centers – the economic heart and cultural soul of towns up and down the state – need help retrofitting their buildings.

Restore Oregon has been studying the need to make our historic buildings seismically resilient for over 6 years and we have served on advisory committees examining the need and the solutions. The bottom line is we do not need to lose these buildings. But retrofitting takes money – typically much more than the average small business person or property owner can finance alone.

The requested funding in HB 2208 is miniscule compared to the statewide need. But it is a START, and should be one of many financial tools available to property owners, including a tax credit-funded historic “Rehab Rebate” as introduced in SB 929, which prioritizes projects that provide affordable housing.

It bears reiterating that there is tremendous public benefit that more than justifies the state's investment. The obvious benefit is avoiding loss of life and injury, and the damage to adjacent property. There is also the loss of tax revenue from properties reduced to just their land value, the loss of income tax revenue through job loss when businesses close, and the overall devastation of the local and state economy.

But also important is the loss of heritage and the character-defining buildings that make Oregon, OREGON. Once that heritage is gone, it's gone forever.

Please vote yes on HB 2208 and champion its passage in the Senate and House.  
Thank you.



Peggy Moretti  
Executive Director