



March 20, 2019

Bill Harvey
Commission Chair
bharvey@bakercounty.org

Co-Chair Lew Frederick
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE, S-419
Salem, Oregon 97301

Co-Chair Susan McLain
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE, H-477
Salem, Oregon 97301

Mark Bennett
Commissioner
mbennett@bakercounty.org

RE: HB 5024

Dear Mr. Frederick and Ms. McLain:

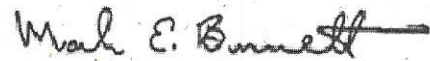
Bruce A. Nichols
Commissioner
bnichols@bakercounty.org

I am writing to request the Joint Committee on Ways and Means support full funding for the **Oregon Consensus** and **Oregon Solutions** programs, funded as part of the statewide centers allocation within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission budget. As a Baker County Commissioner, I have experienced firsthand the benefit these programs provide in helping support community based problem solving.

For example, as part of the SageCon Partnership, eastern Oregon counties including Baker have been able to stand up actions that promote rangeland health, economies, and local work that improves habitat and our communities. Because of this partnership effort and coordination of it through Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions, we have been able to successfully bridge urban-rural divides and make the case that further regulation under the Endangered Species Act is not needed for sage-grouse. We have been able to address issues of land use and development conflict with a framework that balances conservation, local planning and economic needs. Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions have been instrumental in ensuring coordination across multiple layers of government and stakeholders, advancing alignment on balanced policy, and assisting in bringing financial and other resources into areas of needed work.

The Oregon Consensus and Oregon Solutions programs provide very distinct and critical services to communities across the State in reaching agreement on contentious issues and supporting implementation of sustainable solutions. I am thankful the legislature recognizes the significance of these programs, and hope they will continue to be supported in full.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark E. Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Mark Bennett,
Baker County Commissioner

cc: State Senator Arnie Roblan
State Senator Chuck Thomsen
State Representative Teresa Alonso Leon
State Representative Christine Drazan
State Representative Mark Meek
State Representative Mike Nearman
Doug Wilson, LFO
Audrey Nieswandt, LFO