

April 25, 2019

Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
Oregon State Capitol, Hearing Room A
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Bentz and Members of the Committee,

Every year, there is a 10 percent chance of a major flood along the lower Columbia River in Multnomah County, and the risk only grows as climate change and rising sea levels continue to impact river conditions. As you know, the 27-mile levee system on Oregon's banks of the Columbia River greatly reduces this risk. We must manage it properly so that it can continue to do to protect our citizens and their livelihood.

The levees not only guard 59,000 jobs and critical infrastructure like the Portland International Airport, they also protect over 7,500 residents, including 1,400 county and state inmates, as well as sixty residents of Dignity Village, an alternative shelter community in northeast Portland.

This vulnerability to our residents and businesses is what has driven our participation in the Levee Ready Columbia partnership for the last five years. Over the last two months, the Levee Ready Columbia partners, including Multnomah County, have worked diligently to update Senate Bill 431 to address concerns raised during the initial public hearing and other feedback received to date. The amendments represent hours of work to refine, clarify, and improve the legislation. We are extremely proud of this collaborative process and we are confident that the amendment before you today is stronger because of this work.

Creating the Urban Flood Safety & Water Quality District is the critical next step we must take to modernize this important infrastructure, improve flood safety for an area critical to the region's future, and take a more holistic approach to the management of the historic floodplain along the Columbia. I encourage your support on SB 431 A.

Sincerely,

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair