

April 19, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
900 Court St, NE, HR-E  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Library Bonding

Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Girod and Holvey and members of the committee.

I am Multnomah County District 4 Commissioner Lori Stegmann, representing East Multnomah County, including the cities of Gresham, Fairview, Wood Village, Troutdale and Portland, plus Corbett and other unincorporated areas in the Columbia River Gorge. Thank you for inviting us here today to provide testimony. We're here today to ask for your support by appropriating funds to support the construction of a 21st-century library in the Rockwood neighborhood of Gresham.

I grew up in Rockwood, raised a family and operate a business there, and now have the honor of representing our residents as a Multnomah County Commissioner. East County accounts for nearly half of Multnomah County's residents and a greater concentration of diversities than elsewhere in the county. We also know that residents in our communities have lower incomes and experience higher levels of poverty. Over a third of EC residents are severely cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 50% of their monthly income on housing costs.

Residents in my district rely on our local library system for internet access, programming and resources, as well as skill and career development. I brought with me some fact sheets about East County that I hope serve to explain more fully how important an investment this is for us. The four libraries in East Multnomah County are among the community's most heavily used public spaces. In the last year, people visited those libraries more than 565,000 times and checked out 640,000 books and other items.

It's also the case that East Multnomah County faces a deficit of community space. As you'll hear in more detail from Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke even our library spaces in East Multnomah County are insufficient to serve the growing population.

As the Multnomah County Commissioner liaison to the library, I have high regard for the thoughtfulness and diligence the library has shown in analyzing how it can be more efficient and responsive to changing community needs. I am in full support of the library's efforts to modernize its spaces and bring our community the richness and resources it deserves.

Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury has also offered her support. In last week's State of the County speech to Portland City Club, she pledged to take action this year on the library's plan to modernize and expand library spaces.

Libraries are one of the best investments we can make in the potential of our community. I hope you'll join us in affirming that potential in East Multnomah County by allocating funds to get this important work underway. Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

**Commissioner Lori Stegmann**

Multnomah County Commissioner, District 4

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