

February 3, 2021



Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: DOGAMI HB 5010 testimony for 2/3/21 hearing

Dear Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon and Members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee,

Thank you for your commitment, as expressed at the February 1<sup>st</sup> hearing, to maintain DOGAMI as an independent state agency. Along with more than 2,000 concerned citizens, I appreciate your support—and that of your legislative colleagues—in assuring that DOGAMI will continue its long-standing efforts to provide high-quality, objective scientific information for Oregonians.

As a professional engineer who worked at DOGAMI for 26 years, I fully understand that there exist persistent structural problems within the agency that have hindered its smooth operation; and I firmly believe that the Legislature can help the agency become stable. For DOGAMI to perform its important mission providing geological services, it will require: 1) a sustained, stable operating budget that is less dependent on federal grant funds, and 2) maintaining the current levels of staffing (including filling vacant positions).

The Geological Society of Oregon Country and I launched this petition: “Save DOGAMI to Protect Oregon from Natural Disasters!” <https://www.change.org/SaveDOGAMI>. Of the more than 2,000 petition signers, many offered comments to inform you, the Oregon Legislature, that the services provided by DOGAMI have consistently been an excellent value for the taxpayers and citizens of Oregon; that DOGAMI should be adequately funded to perform its essential services; and, DOGAMI’s budget should be increased and stabilized. Below are selected petition comments, intended for you, that relate to DOGAMI’s budget.

Respectfully,

Yumei Wang, PE

## **Selected Petition Comments Related to Funding DOGAMI**

*Note: Many additional comments are available on the value of DOGAMI contributions, including on life safety, property protection, planning, education, ground water resources, mining natural resources, consultants' use of DOGAMI data, lidar, and more.*

"One lesson of the coronavirus pandemic is that we cannot afford to gut or eliminate the governmental entities that help prepare us for disaster. **Whatever the cost, they are an absolute bargain compared to the price, in both dollars and lives**, of facing a disaster without the plans and expertise in place to mitigate its impact. Oregon faces some of the most serious seismic risk in the world; far from being cut, **DOGAMI should be funded to the fullest** to help keep the citizens and the economy of the state safe in the face of inevitable future disasters." Kathryn Schulz (2016 Pulitzer Prize winner for her article *The Really Big One* in The New Yorker)

"DOGAMI has been critical to public safety for decades, pioneering tsunami modeling, putting Oregon decades ahead of neighboring states. The also pioneered high-resolution LIDAR mapping to reveal hundreds of landslides across the State. They have been under attack by developers for many years and have been perceived as a roadblock to coastal development, which is false. The mostly raise their own funds, yet have been blamed for budget problems mostly traced back to having their budgets cut. **Restore funding, increase it** if possible, and keep this critical independent science agency. Chris Goldfinger, Earthquake researcher."

"DOGAMI has been among the **best investments that the State of Oregon has ever made**. Despite their small budget, the dedicated and talented professionals at DOGAMI play a crucial role in serving the entirety of Oregon, achieving excellence in what they do for as long as I can remember. ODOT, municipal public works departments, and public and private building owners alike rely on DOGAMI's geologic hazard maps to make their long-term investment decisions, greatly affecting our built environment over fifty to one hundred years down the road. DOGAMI's tsunami models, inundation maps and evacuation maps are among the best in the world. Every time anyone visits the Oregon coast, both residents and tourists bring DOGAMI maps that would save their lives in the event of an emergency. These maps and DOGAMI's outreach efforts have helped and will continue to positively influence our coastal communities to make informed investment decisions for critical buildings and important infrastructure systems." Kent Yu, past chair of the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory

"The Governor's proposal to dissolve the agency in order to save money is penny wise, pound foolish. The proposed reduction in staff will hinder the Governor's own policy agenda! ("Resilience 2025: Improving our Readiness for the Cascadia Earthquake and Tsunami") Forewarned is forearmed. This agency has been at the forefront of applied practical research and public education in regards to landslides, tsunamis, and earthquakes - information essential for helping save lives and increasing community resilience. Please rectify this proposal in the Governor's budget, and consider how to **adequately fund this department**." John Bauer, former DOGAMI scientist

"We need to maintain preparedness for all sorts of disasters, public health and otherwise. We **cannot continue being penny-wise and pound-foolish** in Oregon" Tanya Schaefer

"I'm a family doctor and a Neighborhood Emergency Team leader. Does Oregon intend to just give in to the major earthquake coming our way? The frequent landslides? The floods? The wildfires that cause landslides when it rains? Are you crazy? **DOGAMI is worth far more** than the slick out-of-state-based corporations Oregon government bends over backwards for." Merilee Karr

"DOGAMI has done exemplary work in identifying natural hazards, explaining the risk to stakeholders and the public, and developing mitigation strategies. Much of this agencies work has become the standard that others follow. The purported budget problems of DOGAMI are due to a **flawed budget model** of the Legislature where public safety must follow the vagaries of the grant system. The **value of DOGAMI to the state has far outweighed any budget problems** and the proposed solution of disbanding the agency will cost us economically and in safety." Jay Raskin, FAIA, past chair of the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory

"DOGAMI in its role saves lives and saves property of homeowners in Oregon. Their maps help all of us. Consultants regularly use the websites to find out about natural hazards that abound in our state. The general public loves to learn about our incredible environment here and its natural history. DOGAMI posts alerts which is very important. They serve the state! I have worked with many state geological surveys in the US in my career and we are blessed with one of the best! We need to **save their budget** and the organization!" Scott Burns, PSU Geology Professor

"As a professor of geology in Oregon for 34 years, and a former member of DOGAMI's advisory board, I am dismayed that the Governor's recommended budget would eliminate its agency status, downsize the geology division, and move it into another agency. DOGAMI provides essential earth science expertise that is vital to planning for the numerous hazards (Earthquakes, landslides, Tsunami, volcanic, etc) that are inherent to living on the active boundary between the Pacific and North American Plates. As an economic (mineral materials) and field geologist, I believe DOGAMI's geology staff also provides basic geology studies that include geology maps, mineral and energy resource assessments, and bedrock characterization that are essential for all of Oregon's citizens, and will be vital in making land use, environmental, and resource decision in the future. Oregonians need DOGAMI, so let's keep it!!!DOGAMI has long been a **very cost-effective agency** for Oregonians, and for more than 10 years has been funded largely by fed..." John Dilles

"I signed this petition because as a structural engineer, I understand the important role of this department in the protection of the lives and patrimony of the Oregonians. The research and data that this department collects is useful to **save public money**, as it helps to develop contingency plans based on seismic risk assessment." Gustavo Araujo

"I work in the geosciences industry. DOGAMI is a valuable tool and resource for the public and business sector. We use DOGAMI resources on a daily basis. Please continue to **fund this organization**. Closing it would have an immediate, negative affect to our engineers and geologists who use their resources in the preparation of their reports for development and other studies." Tima Carlson

"I have worked with DOGAMI on several scientific projects related to natural hazards. Their expertise, their services, their curation of data, and their local and national leadership in protecting the public from natural hazards is invaluable. Oregon's citizens, including schools, hospitals and public services, benefit from the objective information that this agency provides for natural hazard preparedness. Oregon's businesses benefit from the technical information that DOGAMI curates. Oregon's scientists benefit from the expertise and collaboration of DOGAMI professionals in advancing our collective knowledge of natural hazards. States without major geological hazards or mining industries maintain geological surveys. Why, as a state that appreciates the diverse needs of our citizens and our industries, would we neglect such a valuable service that is recognized at national level for their contributions? **Their services save lives, save money**, and make Oregon a better place to live." Ben Leshchinsky

"The unbiased, non-partisan and science-based work performed by DOGAMI over the past 80 years has left Oregon in an enviable position of preparedness for natural hazards ranging from earthquakes to sea level rise. The ever-changing challenges of living on an ever-changing planet are not going to vanish and neither should DOGAMI. **The benefit the state gets from its relatively low level of financial investment in this agency is worth absolutely every penny.**"  
Maureen Walczak

"DOGAMI is an essential state agency that provides the research and information we need on earthquake preparedness and other natural events. Please **preserve DOGAMI in 2021 Budget.**"  
Lynn Youngbar

"Oregon needs the resources that the Oregon Department Of Geology And Mineral Industries provides to help prepare for disasters. It would be **extremely short sighted penny pinching to close it** now. Come on, Oregon. Let' be smart about these things!" Steve Colburn

"To reiterate," DOGAMI to continue to prepare Oregonians for natural disasters, and want the Oregon Legislature to **continue to fund DOGAMI** as an independent agency. DOGAMI is an independent scientific agency of the State of Oregon that develops and provides unbiased information on natural hazards, such as landslides and flooding from winter storms and Cascadia earthquakes and tsunamis. DOGAMI assists before, during and after Oregon disasters, including the 1993 Scott Mills and Klamath Falls earthquakes, the 1996 Willamette Valley floods, the 2007 Great Coastal Gale, and the 2017 Eagle Creek and Chetco Bar fires. Information from DOGAMI is trusted and used by Oregon communities, planners, developers, businesses, and citizens to help protect people and property." Don't rid something that actually works!"  
Terry Jess

"I am a professional licensed geologist working in the Pacific Northwest. The work done by DOGAMI is invaluable and must continue. **This proposal makes zero fiscal sense as so much more will be lost than dollars saved.**" Judith Radloff

"Dogami is critical to safety and emergency preparation in this state. **Please do not defund it!**"  
Ariana White

"As a practical economic geologist living on the Oregon Coast in the Cascadia subduction zone it is **insanity to reduce DOGAMI's budget even one PENNY**, let alone 75%. Protect DOGAMI and the people of Oregon. Oregon has natural resources to exploit. We need state geological departments. Its critical to state economic security. If you can't grow it you HAVE TO mine it."  
Laura Joki

"DOGAMI has provided essential information that informed the public/private effort to improve Oregon's resilience. We must **continue funded** of this critical organization." James Wood  
"DOGAMI is a critical organization in the state of Oregon. They play a crucial role in hazard assessment and disaster planning, and provide important data and information to the public and research community. It would be a huge mistake for Gov. Brown to eliminate this great organization and the wonderful service they provide to all Oregonians. They save lives! **Keep DOGAMI and their budget intact!**" Nicholas Roberts

"Continuing to **fund DOGAMI is essential** to keep Oregon prepared for disasters, including the next Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. Their science based work on natural hazards and impacts to Oregon has been essential to aid municipalities in planning for response and mitigation for these hazards. DOGAMI's work now will save the lives of Oregonians and protect infrastructure recovery in the long term. They are one of the **best state organizations I dealt with in my engineering career and deserved to be funded.**" Mary Ellen Collentine

"I use the unbiased data collected by DOGAMI to create maps and geologic illustrations for geology guidebooks, including the well-known "Roadside Geology" series. I depend heavily on accurate data collected by state agencies all around the country to communicate not only geologic data but natural hazards information to the public. **It is remarkable how much this agency has been able to produce and accomplish on such a limited budget**, eliminating might save a few pennies but the losses would be significant would be a devastating move and would leave Oregonians ill prepared for hazards in its future." Chelsea Feeney

"DOGAMI is critical to save lives and be prepared for natural disasters. Their maps are essential in understanding and mitigating risk. Please **continue to fund** them. Thank you" Tamara Olcott  
"DOGAMI, although likely the least known of State agencies is incredibly important to Oregon preparedness for Cascadia. Oregon lags woefully behind California and Washington in preparing for Cascadia. DOGAMI and OSU are the only two entities that can keep Oregon up to date and drive the change needed so that Cascadia doesn't hurt us as badly as it could. Getting rid of DOGAMI would be in a word, stupid. If anything the **Department should be strengthened** in the Geology area and also **receive funds from the Legislature** as well as it's current funding sources. **General funds need to be channeled toward the geology department** so that we can have early warning systems like California and the ones starting in Washington. **How many thousands of deaths, millions if not billions in damages, to say nothing of injuries do Legislators want to enable by being "penny wise and pound foolish"? Pay a little now, or pay billions and lives lost, later.**" Robert Mill

"The ODGMI is a very important agency because their work prepares Oregonians for all natural disasters, and I need to know what to do if a natural disaster (not really if but when) this might occur in my backyard...already had one in 2017, and the gorge is well-documented in terms of potential geological occurrences . **PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE DO NOT DE-FUND THIS VITAL AGENCY**" Dietrich Dietrich

"Having trusted tools to assess risk to mitigate naturals are vital to every community in Oregon. Please **continue to fund** DOGAMI." Jill Punches

"I signed b/c I believe that science should drive our policy and decision making, not politics. Also as someone who has evaluated post earthquake and tsunami response efforts abroad (Haiti and Aceh, Indonesia) and other disasters, a major take home that led to poorer outcomes from those events was the lack of coordination in preparation and planning. Getting rid of DOGAMI is not good policy! We are currently dealing with a global devastating pandemic - it should teach us a) we could have been better prepared b) now is not the time to stop preparing for and mitigating the next major emergency. Emergencies do not have to be disasters. DOGAMI has been a leader in Cascadia earthquake preparedness - if anything we **should be giving them more money**, not cutting them and breaking them up! Oregon - lets get back to doing the right thing!" Kay Mattson

"DOGAMI is fundamental to the economy and safety of Oregon and Oregonians. Further, as a premier source of data, education, and information, the agency's reach extends far beyond the state line. Dissolving DOGAMI makes no sense. **Give them more money!**" Susan Wacaster  
"DOGAMI was a true help when I was working on the Bear Creek Greenway trail system. Please **continue funding** this valuable department!!!" Karen Smith

"Please do not eliminate the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) from the State budget. The savings are small, but the loss is great. As a geologist with more than 40 years' experience in the western U.S., I think DOGAMI punches well above its weight, with nationally recognized experts in the assessment of natural hazards from earthquakes, landslides, and tsunami, as well as groundwater geology, and laser terrain mapping. This data is used by industry, consultants, other government agencies, academics, and the general public to make informed decisions about Oregon's natural hazards and resources. **In this new year, let's get something right. Save DOGAMI and protect Oregon!**" Ray Wells