

Dear Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield, and members of the Committee:

My name is Melinda Baxter, I live in Toledo Oregon and am a member of the greater Toledo community. I am an elected Director for the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District; I am a retired attorney and currently a mediator and restorative justice practitioner; and I am a life-long swimmer.

On behalf of the community, I co-petitioned the Lincoln County Commissioners for an Order to establish Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District to maintain, improve and operate the Toledo swimming pool and related facilities. The pool was on the brink of closing which would have been devastating for our East County community.

The District Board, the District Manager, facility staff, and the community have worked together to bring us to where we are today. We are proud of our vibrant and active aquatic and community center. It is so much more than just a swimming pool.

I am writing in support of funding for the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center. Materials for this request have been submitted by Representative David Gomberg. This funding is crucial for us to continue our project that is so vital to our area. Funding is essential for us to sustain our momentum and strategic plan progress.

What follows are just some of the benefits of pools and recreation centers that inspire us to move forward:

- Safe place to swim. When pools close non-affluent children don't have anywhere relatively safe to swim. They will head to a river, lake or other area where the risk of drowning dramatically increases.
- Lower delinquency rate. Communities that have swimming pools experience significant reductions in juvenile crime among kids that would otherwise find their way into trouble. In his book, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools*, 2007, Jeff Wiltse reports that on average, communities with pools see delinquency rates reduced by 28%.
- Teach vital skills for every age. Pools provide the setting to teach vital skills to all ages such as fitness, comfort in the water, water safety, sports, and swimming lessons. It has been said, "No one dies from not being able to play basketball."
- Economic benefits. Studies show that recreation facilities increase property values, draw people seeking to buy homes, attract businesses and indicate a vibrant community.
- Community building through recreation, safe and supervised activities for youth and families, education and partnerships with schools, and social interaction across generations.
- Reduction of health care costs. Recreation/aquatic centers provide healthy exercise for all ages reducing long-term healthcare costs for all citizens. Heart disease, obesity, asthma and related diseases, and other age-related conditions are impacted.
- Expansion of other recreational possibilities including youth sports, exercise equipment, dance and yoga classes, community activities, and water activities such as fishing, kayaking, scuba diving, surfing, boating, etc.

With funding we can not only sustain our momentum but go well beyond our original goals. We are excited about our evolving aquatics and community center because of its value to the community. Thank you for considering funding our request.