

April 14, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield and Members of the Committee,

It is my distinct pleasure to write you today in full support of the City of Gresham's request for funding to complete the capital construction of Gradin Community Sports Park, Phase II. This 32-acre facility in southeast Gresham has the potential to be a significant asset for all of East Multnomah County. Phase II funding will be instrumental in increasing Gradin's capacity to provide Gresham youth and families with quality outdoor recreation opportunities for generations to come.

Currently, Gradin Sports Park is a primary location for youth baseball, softball and soccer in the Gresham community. Prior to the pandemic more than 28,000 athletes – mostly children – participated in sports at Gradin, and the demand for these fields has steadily grown over the years. The proposed Phase II expansion would not only help meet the growing demand for play spaces, it would also provide much-needed amenities currently lacking at the park such as restrooms, a playground, and additional parking. There are currently no tournament play spaces in East Multnomah County, and the total number of sports fields is inadequate to meet the demand of our local teams. This investment will create a one-of-its-kind facility to bring together community-based organizations and children for mentoring and community building.

In its 2016 report to City Council, the City of Gresham's Commission on Children and Families underscored the need for grant-funded park enhancements noting that, while the City's recent investments in recreation programming have been positive, "there continues to be a need for additional recreational amenities, mentoring programming and healthy lifestyle opportunities for children and families in Gresham." Completing the Gradin improvements will do just that, providing accessible, quality recreational opportunities for Gresham and East Multnomah County residents in our own community.

Residents in Gresham have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; of the six zip codes with more than 2,000 cases in the Portland metro area, five of them are located within Gresham. As we anticipate our recovery it is even more critical to provide healthy outdoor activities for our youth to reduce isolation and build community. Thank you for your consideration of this important project for funding, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Bergstrom
Executive Director, Active Children Portland

