

Sen. Johnson, Sen. Steiner-Hayward, Rep. Rayfield, members of the Joint Ways & Means Committee, thank you for your service and the opportunity to comment on the State's budget priorities. I am Ken Thrasher, Emeritus Board Member and volunteer for the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

As someone who has testified before you on many educational issues and organizations, I commend you for prioritizing Oregon schools and learning.

The Aquarium contributed to the State's Environmental Literacy Plan, and continues to provide education programs to foster ocean literacy in Oregon:

- Their School Outreach presents to thousands of elementary school students in 21 counties. And they've been doing it virtually since the pandemic forced schools to operate remotely.
- The Aquarium trains teachers in marine science, and provide curriculum, lesson plans and digital resources – trusted tools educators need.
- They inspire youth volunteers to consider marine science careers and partner with colleges to give interns and researchers real-world experiences.
- The Aquarium is a place where future scientists are made

I support Gov. Brown's inclusion of \$5M in the State's budget for the Aquarium to make capital improvements to three core galleries. These funds will expand a popular touch pool, and remodel exhibits to make them more accessible and educational.

Most importantly, the three galleries narrate the complexity of Oregon's coastal ecosystem – from sandy shores to the depths of the Pacific. We've provided a 2pg. document that details the Phase II project details.

I know you have hard decisions to make. I think the Aquarium's capital project aligns with all you care about: Oregon's education, environment, economy and the entertainment that draws others to our beautiful coast. As a longtime board member, and philanthropic supporter of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, I ask you to approve the Aquarium's \$5M request for Phase II to improve their galleries.