



**HIGH COUNTRY**  
HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER  
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HARNEY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Harney County



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

May 6, 2021

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you and bring forward ideas for SB 5534. My name is Nicholas Calvin and I am the Director for Harney County Health Department in Burns, Oregon. In an effort to spur job development and health equity in East Oregon, it is vital that funds from this bill be used to perform a detailed study and analysis into the needs, cost, and development of the creation of an Oregon State Public Health Lab facility in Eastern Oregon. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of infrastructure to combat the pandemic in East Oregon led to serious issues in such a large state. As a health department, we had to send COVID test samples to the only state lab in Hillsboro on the opposite side of the state or to labs in Washington. This put overwhelming strain on the state's one state lab leading to extensive delays in testing results, up to two weeks at one point. I believe a lab in East Oregon would solve this problem and prevent it in the future.

The creation of a state public health lab is a massive endeavor, and in order to begin the process a detailed study needs to be conducted. Funding is a major barrier in this completion and the use of Capital Construction funds would help greatly. As the pandemic hopefully comes to a swift end, the inadequacies of some of our public health infrastructure has been brought to light. Please recognize the need of people on the eastern part of the state for more accessibility to laboratory services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Calvin, J.D. MPH