

**Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, State and Regional Affairs Advisor  
In Support of Senate Bill 5534  
Joint Committee on Capital Construction  
April 7, 2021**



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a range of public services that includes land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, housing and homeless services, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

We are here today to express our support for four projects and programs that help advance Metro's legislative priorities. None of this funding would come directly to Metro; these are important projects and programs that we support in coalition with our partners.

**Brownfield Redevelopment Fund:** This is an existing revolving fund managed by Business Oregon that plays a critical role in addressing the cleanup of contaminated sites statewide. Recapitalization of this fund with \$10 million in lottery bond proceeds is the top priority of the Oregon Brownfields Coalition, a coalition coordinated by Metro that includes more than 50 public, private and nonprofit entities from around the state. The 2019 Legislature allocated lottery bond proceeds to the fund but as you know, that bond sale was subsequently canceled. There are thousands of properties around Oregon that are vacant or underutilized because of known or perceived environmental contamination. These brownfields are failing to contribute to Oregon's economic recovery and undermine the livability of communities statewide. Over its life, the Brownfields Redevelopment Fund has issued \$26.3 million in grants and loans to contaminated sites statewide, supporting projects in 34 Oregon counties. Nearly 75 percent of grants have been awarded to projects outside the Portland region.

**Levee Grant Fund:** This request supports critical improvements to levees statewide. Levees play an important role in reducing the risk of flooding and are located all over the state. In the Portland region, we are most concerned with the levee system along the Columbia River which is in need of significant repairs. We join others in requesting \$10 million for this vital infrastructure; as you know, the 2019 Legislature allocated lottery bonds for this purpose but that bond sale was subsequently canceled.

**Willamette Falls Locks:** We join our partners in advocating for \$14.5 million in state funding to support the repair and re-opening of the Locks. This investment will go hand-in-hand with the establishment of the Public Corporation (upon successful and anticipated passage of HB 2564) to own, manage, and operate the Locks. This critical state investment will allow the Locks to become operational, returning the Willamette River to one

navigable waterway, revitalizing economic river development and drawing visitors to the area.

**Affordable housing preservation and maintenance:** We are all aware of the acute housing crisis in our communities that has only worsened because of the pandemic and wildfires. Over the years, we have built thousands of affordable homes across Oregon. Some of those homes are urgently in need of repairs and other investments. Funding this \$100 million request would help ensure that our already-built affordable housing stays safe and available for the next generation.

We urge the committee to invest in these critical programs. Thank you very much for your consideration.