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Co-chairs Beyer and McLain and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Metro, the Portland area's regional government, we are pleased to support HB 2564, which enacts the recommendation of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission (WFLC) to establish a public corporation as the new owner/operator to manage the operations and maintenance of the Locks following their transfer from the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Together with the state of Oregon, local governments and private businesses, Metro has long supported the repair and reopening of the Locks. Metro participated actively in the Locks Task Force created by the 2015 Legislature (SB 131) and the Locks Commission created by the 2017 Legislature (SB 256).

Significant benefits will be derived from the repair and reopening of the Locks, which will reconnect the Upper and Lower Willamette River. The Willamette is one of only 20 National Water Trails designated by the National Park Service. The opportunity to support redevelopment plans under way in communities with river frontage, including those in close proximity to Metro investments, has led Metro to play a leading role in the effort to restore the Locks. Additionally, we are intrigued by the opportunity to explore the potential for lower cost and more environmentally sound movement of commodities, open up new markets for river tourism, and enhance recreational boating.

Now is the time to take action. The US Army Corps of Engineers has completed and gained approval for a plan to transfer the Locks to a non-federal entity in recognition of the loss of nationally significant economic benefit. Throughout this process, the Corps has been a cooperative partner and has structured their action around making a transfer to an entity that will repair and operate the Locks. However, failure to identify a transferee will result in a more permanent decommissioning of the Locks through construction of a concrete bulkhead. The recommendations of the Locks Commission are consistent with the direction of the Corps in both scope and timing.

In conclusion, we urge the 2020 Legislature to adopt HB 2564 to create the proposed Willamette Falls Locks Public Corporation.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Peterson".

Lynn Peterson
Metro Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Lewis".

Christine Lewis
Metro, District 2
Willamette Falls Locks Commission Member