



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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February 2, 2021

RE: Testimony in support of SB 29

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) welcomes SB 29 to transfer management responsibility of State Capitol State Park from our agency back to the Department of Administrative Services.

Since January 1, 2008, OPRD has been responsible for the landscaping and grounds maintenance on the State Capitol grounds and a portion of the capitol mall. Prior to this, the capitol grounds and capitol mall area were maintained by the Department of Administrative Services with funding from rental assessments charged to adjacent agencies. Statutory changes during the 2007 legislative session shifted financial responsibility for maintenance to constitutionally-dedicated Lottery Funds. (SB 632B, 2007)

Currently, both DAS employees and OPRD employees provide landscaping and grounds maintenance on portions of the Capitol Mall. The State Capitol grounds require a landscaping level of service that is not typical in the tradition of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. SB 29 would remove the challenges of training park rangers for specific tasks that are more specialized to landscape DAS employees. The bill would also remove the duplication of two different agency employees in a similar area doing similar (and in some cases, identical) work.

In addition, the physical assets on the capitol grounds, such as the fountains, trees and memorials, require repair and maintenance that can be challenging to our small department as aging infrastructure continues to require more attention and greater budgetary requirements.

The COVID-19 health emergency caused a first-ever statewide shutdown of the state park system last year and imperiled two major sources of funding for OPRD: Lottery and park visitor revenue. There are zero General Fund dollars in the state park operational budget. As a result, the agency immediately curtailed spending by reducing seasonal hiring, laying off staff managed by the central office, and stopped both incidental and important spending on facility repairs. The challenges of 2020 have intensified the agency's need to focus on our core mission; providing the state park system and heritage service to communities while fulfilling our legal obligations. We need help from partners to support programs that may be worthwhile, but are not the best use of agency staff and resources.
