

**Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager
In Support of House Bill 5023: Brownfields Funding
Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
March 3, 2021**



Co-Chairs Beyer and Gomberg and Members of the Subcommittee:

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 broad range of public services that includes land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

Since 2014 Metro has coordinated the efforts of the Oregon Brownfields Coalition, a diverse alliance of more than 50 partners from the public, private and nonprofit sectors united by a desire to advance solutions that can return Oregon's thousands of contaminated sites to productive use. At Metro specifically, one impetus behind this effort is the desire to make the most efficient use of our existing urban land. Another is the potential benefit of converting sites that are degrading the economic and environmental health of their surrounding neighborhoods into assets that build prosperity and community.

Brownfields vary widely in size, setting, complexity and redevelopment potential. There is no single tool that will address all of them, which is why the members of the Brownfields Coalition have supported a variety of policy and funding proposals and are doing so again this session. Two of these are funding requests that are or will be before this subcommittee.

Brownfields Redevelopment Fund, \$10 million (HB 5023, POP 105): In your last two hearings, Business Oregon has described this program, which provides loans as well as planning and assessment grants to public and nonprofit brownfields owners, and loans to private owners. Recapitalization of the BRF is the Brownfields Coalition's top priority this session. Members of the Brownfields Coalition have strongly supported the agency's \$10 million lottery bond request.

- A letter of support with 28 public/private/nonprofit signers has been posted on OLIS on behalf of the Oregon Brownfields Coalition.

Brownfield Properties Revitalization Fund, \$5 million (HB 2518): This bill, currently awaiting an expected work session in the House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity, would create a forgivable loan (i.e., grant) program to support brownfield cleanups. This program would complement, not duplicate, the BRF. First and foremost, the BRF does not provide grants for cleanup (BRF grants are limited to planning and site assessment); cleanup funds are often the hardest dollars for projects to find. Second, the BRF does not provide grants to private sector landowners. Third, the grants this program would offer have a larger upper limit than those provided by the BRF. Additional grant funds would be available to brownfield owners who provide certain public benefits in addition to the cleanup itself. The request in HB 2518 is for \$5 million from the general fund.

- A bulleted summary of HB 2518 can be found on the next page of this testimony.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these important requests.

HB 2518-A: Brownfield Properties Revitalization Fund

Chief sponsors: Rep. Helm, Sen. Frederick

Co-sponsors: Rep. Marsh, Rep. Pham, Rep. Ruiz

Brought forward by members of the Oregon Brownfield Coalition

Questions – contact Randy Tucker, Metro, 503.481.9455, randy.tucker@oregonmetro.gov

- Creates Oregon Brownfield Properties Revitalization Fund, administered by Business Oregon
- \$5 million request
- Grants available for up to 50% of eligible costs (defined); maximum grant \$250,000
- Grants may also cover an additional 25% or \$125,000, whichever is less, of eligible costs, for each of up to two of the following “enhancements” (with specific criteria) (total not to exceed the lesser of 100% of eligible costs or \$500,000):
 - Construction, or redevelopment of existing buildings, to provide affordable housing
 - Cleanup in a high-poverty census tract; a rural or distressed area as defined in ORS 285A.010; or an area with above-average concentrations of historically disadvantaged households or communities of color
 - Cleanup of a site to be used for a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging station in a location identified in an electric vehicle infrastructure plan developed by ODOT
 - Dedication of land as a public park or natural area
 - Construction of a health facility in an area designated as having unmet health care needs by the Office of Rural Health
 - Environmental cleanup of previously developed sites contaminated by wildfire
- Applicant may not have caused, contributed to or exacerbated release of hazardous substances at the brownfield
- Applicant must conduct cleanup subject to DEQ oversight or final approval
- Once approved, grant may be issued as a conditional loan (zero interest, five-year term) with 100% forgiveness upon proof of project completion
- Business Oregon shall consider ways to encourage participation in cleanup projects by minority/women contractors and emerging small businesses
- Business Oregon will develop rules, which will establish criteria for prioritizing the distribution of funds