



February 11, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Ref.: SB 5702

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Girod and Rep. Holvey:

I write in support of SB 5702 capital request allocation on behalf of the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance (ATEA) in Hood River County. The mission of Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) is to promote the creation of family-wage jobs, the diversification of the economic base, and the growth, development and retention of business and industry within a five-county district, including Hood River County.

ATEA partners including Hood River County School District and Columbia Gorge Community College intend to establish in 2023 an articulated Agriculture Program of Study, offering high school students an opportunity to earn early college credit. This program will promote retention and diversification of small family farms by preparing students to succeed in agriculture, including traditional skills and the adoption, where relevant, of new technologies. Funding for a feasibility study to identify industry skills is secured and the study will commence late winter 2022.

Capital investment through SB 5702, as supported by Sen. Thomsen, will be instrumental to this project by allowing acquisition of a working farm by the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance. This project is recognized among the top 10 priorities for 2022 by the Hood River County Economic Development Working Group.

This project also fits well with the Robust Workforce action plan in the 2022-2027 Columbia Gorge Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). MCEDD collaborated with community representatives over the last year to develop the CEDS to identify strategies based on current trends and areas best suited for growth to sustain and enhance the region's economy. Working closely with the ATEA group in our region will accelerate the Robust Workforce action plan with the goal to "cultivate a talented, multicultural workforce through diverse, family-wage career training aligned with industry needs while providing essential infrastructure supports for workforce participation in each community."

Thank you for your support of SB 5702 and this capital funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessica Metta".

Jessica Metta  
Executive Director