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

Feb. 11, 2022

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

The Port of Hood River would like to submit for your consideration our support of SB 5702 capital request allocation on behalf of the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance (ATEA) in Hood River County.

This request will enable the resumption of agricultural production on currently underused farmland while also serving as a "learning lab" for students enrolled in an agricultural program of study. This farmland is recognized for high-value production and thus will be an ideal site for students to apply their skills in mastering the business of agriculture. Project sponsors propose to return the farm to active production in conjunction with a dual-credit educational program of study.

The site will serve to test new agricultural technologies, which will be essential as farmers seek to maximize efficiency amid times of climate change, workforce disruption and global competition. Success will help ensure the continuation of family farming in Hood River County and the Mid-Columbia region by equipping new generations with the knowledge, skills and hands-on learning to succeed in the business of farming.

Capital investment through SB 5702, as supported by Sen. Thomsen, will be instrumental to this project by allowing acquisition of the parcel by the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance ("ATEA"). ATEA will be an economic ecosystem centered on an "innovation farm" and program of study at Hood River Valley High School and Columbia Gorge Community College. Agricultural and technology sectors will partner with entrepreneurs to help agricultural producers remain competitive.

ATEA embraces these elements:

- Program of agricultural study: A dual credit high school program leading to degree or certificate at Columbia Gorge Community College with ability to transfer to four-year institutions for continuing education. College courses also provide opportunity for the incumbent workforce to gain new skills needed for advancement in agricultural careers.

- Innovation farm: An active, commercial farm that will expand the region's capacity to produce locally-sourced fruits, vegetables and specialty crops while providing students with opportunity to apply their knowledge in a working farm. Current and emerging agricultural

technologies will be integrated into the production model, both to enhance year-round agricultural production and also to test new technologies in a real-world setting.

We encourage your support of SB 5702 and our capital funding request.

Sincerely,

Michael McElwee
Executive Director, Port of Hood River