

March 3, 2023

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE - HR
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 3016 - Community Green Infrastructure Grant Program

Chair Pam Marsh, Vice-Chairs Bobby Levy and Emerson Levy, and members of the Committee:

Over the last five years, the City of Gresham has partnered with Multnomah County and Friends of Trees in the Green Gresham, Healthy Gresham Initiative with grant funding from East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District that is soon coming to a close. The partnership formed to address low tree canopy that is particularly acute in West Gresham neighborhoods. One neighborhood in particular, Rockwood, is a neighborhood in Gresham facing especially high socioeconomic stressors where over 50% of the population represents communities of color, and is 58% low income, and 14% linguistically isolated - making the area much more diverse and lower income than the state as a whole and has significant disparities in services compared to the greater Portland Metropolitan Area.

Because of low tree canopy and large areas of pavement in neighborhoods such as Rockwood, extreme heat events like we saw in the summer of 2021, have been deadly in this area and community members continue to experience heat vulnerability in their daily lives. With the urban heat island effect from our built environment along with the lack of community resources, our underserved community members are not only at a higher risk for acute impacts but have less ability to adapt to chronic climate change impacts over time.

The Green Gresham, Healthy Gresham partnership has leveraged other federal, state and local funds to work with youth interns to inventory thousands of street trees and recruit hundreds of homeowners to plant over 500 trees to cool the environment along our busy arterials to shade these human corridors as well as Gresham's homes, businesses, and schools.

We are seeing great dividends from the coalition and additional funding opportunities and resources outlined in House Bill 3016 will help our city and region to decrease the environmental and health disparities in Gresham, as well as enhancing economic opportunities for youth and frontline communities through established job training programs with Multnomah County and various community-based organizations, such as Blueprint Foundation and Friends of Trees. These organizations and many others could directly benefit from a green infrastructure grant program to improve health outcomes and increase access to the benefits of trees, green spaces and environmental services that are currently not distributed equally for people from under-resourced communities here in Gresham and East Multnomah County.

Thank you,

City of Gresham

