

Submitter: Molly Merideth

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural
Resources

Measure: HB5008

I am writing to ask for your support for fully funding the Gorge Commission's budget (House Bill 5008)

The Gorge Commission is tasked with protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreation resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Commission's budget is unique because it is split evenly between Washington and Oregon – whichever budget is lower is eventually adopted by both states. This means that Washington provides a 100% match to all Oregon funding and, if Oregon does not fully fund the Gorge Commission, the dollars not allocated by Oregon are also removed from the Washington budget. Please do not leave Washington's matching money on the table and hinder the Gorge Commission's work.

While the Governor's Request Budget is a good start, I ask that you restore the POPs that did not make it into the Commission's very modest budget. Over the last few years it has occurred to the Commission that it cannot complete its mission without taking into account two critical things – the effects of climate change on the Gorge and the lack of the staffing to engage fully with diverse communities.

POP 104 would provide staffing to the Commission to implement the concrete mitigation and adaptation measures of the Climate Change Action Plan that it adopted in December. The mitigation measures in the Climate Change Action Plan include carbon sequestration, reducing fire risk, electric vehicle infrastructures, and improved regional transportation and transit. The adaptation measures include preserving wetlands and oak woodlands, ensuring cold water habitats are protected, and honoring tribal treaty rights including the rights to fish and collect first foods. POP 105 would provide staffing so that the Commission can reach out to diverse communities and ensure that all voices are heard when decisions are made about how to manage the Gorge, including in the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan. I ask that you restore POPs 104 & 105 so that this critical work can be done. Finally, I ask that you restore POP 103 to the budget so that the Commission can bring on legal counsel to advise the Commissioners and ensure that the Commission follows Gorge protection laws and open public meetings and public records laws.

Please restore these three POPs to the Commission's budget and retain the remaining part of the Governor's Request Budget for the agency. The budget is very modest and it would be a shame to hinder the Commission's work and also leave the

100% match from Washington on the table.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my support and for the work you do for our communities!