

March 30th, 2023

Representative Dacia Grayber, Chair, Representatives Rick Lewis and Representative Thuy Tran, Vice-Chairs
House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the nearly 900 Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 (PROTEC17) represented employees of City of Portland, I write today in support of HB 3515 which would provide Portland voters with the option to create a more stable funding model for public parks. PROTEC17 represents engineers, planners, information technology specialists, technicians, and other professionals who live and work in the Portland area, as well as approximately 8,000 public sector employees in other parts of the Pacific Northwest. This includes the botanic, engineering, and planning staff within the Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau.

We believe that public services provide the highest value to taxpayers when funding sources are stable and reliable. Additionally, timely maintenance of public infrastructure yields significant savings when costly replacements can be avoided through regular repairs and upkeep. For years, Portland Parks and Recreation has struggled to balance the day-to-day operational needs of its facilities with the required maintenance to keep these assets in good condition. A patchwork of general fund dollars, bonds, and levies have kept the bureau afloat, but it is clear that this has not led to ideal outcomes, as has been seen recently in a series of facilities closures due in part to deferred maintenance.

Outside of Portland, PROTEC17 represents employees at Seattle Parks and Recreation. We have seen first-hand the improvement the transition to a parks district has provided to funding stability in Seattle. We have seen, for example, that this district allowed Seattle Parks to weather the storm of general fund instability during the pandemic, which has allowed the continuation of critical services during a time of high need.

Parks provide a crucial community service, and the voters of Portland have repeatedly shown an eagerness to provide funding for these facilities. With your support for HB 3515, the decision to form a parks district ultimately will rest with Portland voters. The members of PROTEC17 hope that you will provide the people of Portland with this option.

Sincerely,



Elliot Levin
Research Director and Legislative Advocate
PROTEC17