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April 6 2023

Dear Senator Lew Frederick, Co-Chair; Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair, and Committee Members of the Joint Committee of Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Education,

As a current and longtime Wallowa County Commission, I am writing to **express my support** for two important statewide, public service programs at Portland State University: 1) **Oregon Consensus, a program of the state's dispute resolution services**, and 2) **Oregon Solutions**. I have experienced first-hand the benefit these programs provide throughout all parts of our state in helping to support community-based problem solving. **I am thankful the legislature recognizes the significance of these programs and urge you to restore this program's funding to the full continuing level of service (CSL) as in the Governor's budget.**

Following the withdrawal of the Blues Forest Plans, I was among a number of county commissioners who met with leaders from the US Forest Service to discuss our concerns and identify opportunities to approach forest planning in a new way. We drew on the resources and expertise of the Oregon Consensus, housed within the National Policy Consensus Center (NPCC) at Portland State University, to provide facilitation for a series of what began as tense conversations.

Through those conversations, however, we jointly decided to launch the Blue Intergovernmental Council (BIC), of which I serve as one of the three conveners to lead this effort. To assure the success of this pioneering, collaborative approach to forest planning, we drew on the services of Oregon Solutions (also housed within NPCC) to provide the project management and collaborative implementation expertise needed to bring together the state, federal, tribal, and local leaders who would comprise the BIC to work together to develop a new forest plan that could be successfully implemented to address the multiple use needs of the many local communities dependent on those forests. Through Oregon Solution's help, we convened the BIC, established operating principles, built an organizational structure, agreed on the desired conditions on which the forest planning process will be based, and completed the first socioeconomic assessment of local communities to help in decision making around forest management. The BIC is now able to move forward on its own in the development of the Blues Forest plan and receiving national attention as a new model for forest planning.

Oregon Solutions and Oregon Consensus provide a unique and vital service to communities across the State. Thank you for considering this request for their funding at full CSL.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Susan Roberts