

April 27, 2023

Dear Joint Ways and Means Committee,

Hello and thank you for visiting Ontario and taking the time to read my letter. My name is Megan Cook and I am a lifelong resident of Ontario Oregon. My husband and I, both graduates from Ontario High School, are business owners here in Ontario and proud parents of our two children, Avery 13 and Evan 11. We enjoy spending time together snow skiing, playing sports, and being outside.

Just like anything else over 40 years Ontario has changed a lot since I was little. I grew up in a town that had a pool, where you could safely walk anywhere, and the parks were used by the youth of our town. This is not the same for Ontario anymore. We do not have a pool, it is not safe to walk freely around town, and we do not see interaction of residents as often. With the legalization of hard drugs, we are seeing more transient, more violence, and more spaces are becoming unsafe to hang out at.

A community center would provide health and fitness opportunities, a safe place for youth to engage with other youth in person, a gathering spot for all ages to interact with each other. Our youth desperately need things to do that are easy to get to and have positive effects on the physical and mental health.

We need a safe place for our citizens to go to be active and to engage with one another. Somewhere you won't find needles on the ground or sketchy people passed out or selling drugs. A place that has supervision but freedom to learn and grow in a positive environment.

Thank you again for visiting our town and for reading my letter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Cook". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "M" and "C".

Megan Cook