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Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem Oregon 97301

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

I am writing in support of the Columbia River Gorge Commission's submitted budget for the 2023-2025 Biennium, specifically inclusion of **Policy Option Package #104 funding to support the Commission's work with Tribes, local communities, and diverse partners across the Gorge to build resiliency to climate change**. The Commission recently unanimously adopted a Climate Change Action Plan that includes specific actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the Gorge. The Commission has been a reliable and effective part of the Columbia River Gorge community, engaging with partners such as Oregon State University Extension Service to build a thriving Master Naturalist program that engages members of the public in being knowledgeable stewards of natural resources. Recently, the Commission staff expanded their partnership with OSU Extension Service to develop and pilot a first of its kind in Oregon Climate Change training program called *Climate Stewards*. *Climate Stewards* will allow the Commission a means to advance the goals defined in its Climate Change Action Plan through direct public engagement. Through close partnership with the Commission, OSU Extension Service is helping to build a corps of knowledgeable and skilled Gorge community members passionate about climate change adaptation and resiliency work.

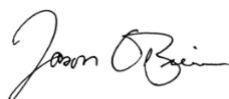
The Columbia River Gorge Commission is a unique bi-state agency that works to protect and enhance the scenic, natural, cultural and recreational resources, and support local economies, of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The Gorge Commission's budget is funded equally by Oregon and Washington, but the lowest budget set by one state must also be adopted by the other state. The current Gorge Commission budget in front of Oregon lawmakers is \$2,292,644, which is approximately \$360,000 short of Washington's approved budget of \$2,653,337. If the Oregon Legislature only funds the smaller budget, Washington will be required to reduce its contribution to match Oregon's. This will effectively eliminate \$720,000 from the Commission's budget, including vital funding for climate change resilience work in the Gorge like *Climate Stewards*. Climate Change is a threat to the economic, social and environmental health of the state and its residents, and as such, funding for the Commission gives them and OSU Extension Service the means to expand and maintain partnerships critical for addressing these challenges.

**Washington's approved budget includes this essential climate change funding, and we ask that Oregon lawmakers approve it as well.** This Gorge Commission funding is vitally important to support the resilience of communities, natural areas, and working lands of the Gorge in a changing climate. This work dovetails with Executive Order 20-04 requiring Oregon agencies to use all of their powers to address climate change.

I ask that you match the approved WA State Legislature's budget, so the Commission receives this critical funding to advance climate change resilience work in the Gorge.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments,

With Gratitude,



Jason O'Brien, M.S.