



May 1, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Girod and Representative Holvey
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: CREF Slate 2023-25

Dear Co-chairs Sen. Fred Girod & Rep. Paul Holvey, and members of the Oregon Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

On behalf of the Columbia County Museum Association (CCMA), we respectfully request the consideration and approval by the Oregon Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction, for the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon (CACO) 2023 Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF) recommended slate of capital construction projects. The 16 endorsed projects on the slate have all been carefully vetted by the Coalition, and we're privileged our project is included.

The recommended CREF allocation of \$400,000 to the CCMA is for the construction of a newly dedicated 2,300-square-foot space (in addition to expansive hall wall and auditorium exhibit spaces for notable collections) in the nationally registered, historic John Gumm Building, in the downtown St. Helens historic district.

Our museum is currently located on the 3rd floor of the county's courthouse, in re-purposed offices, and is accessible only by stairs. The current location severely restricts displays, limits access for challenged or disabled visitors and volunteers, puts the collection at risk, and physically limits the growth of the collection and program. The museum needs a new home.

Fortunately, Columbia County is funding and implementing a substantial capital project for the overall restoration and redevelopment of the historic John Gumm Building. The county is currently underway with plans to remodel the building's three floors to accommodate the needs of the growing county services and additional inclusion of the county's economic development office, museum, and other public outreach offices. The county's renovation project establishes an exceptional "host" building for the museum, a historical one with better access, and provides space for the museum's displays and storage. It does not, however, cover the costs to create the specialized systems that will allow appropriate protection and preservation of the CCMA collection. Specialized, museum-centric equipment for UV and other critical environmental protections and displays for artifacts are just a few examples of the improvements that will result. This

CREF allocation would accomplish that, and we're grateful the CCMA's application was viewed similarly, and favorably, by the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon.

The CCMA greatly appreciates the support we received from the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon in the project proposal grant request. We are certain that each and every other project and organization has received the same degree of scrutiny, and assistance, in producing the full portfolio of recommended projects from the many that were submitted. That's how the CREF process was established, and that's how it's working: well.

Again, the CCMA is pleased to be included in the Coalition's recommended slate of projects; we know that each community and organization will benefit, and provide public value, just as ours will. The complete restoration and build-out estimates for the John Gumm Building total around \$12.5 million, a significant "match" that provides a safe, ADA-accessible location with public amenities and ancillary resources for events, gatherings, and presentations. In addition, with the new museum location, improved access, visibility, and shared assets (auditorium and environmentally controlled storage), we are confident that our community supporters and other cultural and historical stakeholders will provide additional resources.

The Columbia County Museum Association board and membership, as well as our community and project partners, thank you for your consideration and support of the CREF slate of projects.

We thank you in advance for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Les Watters". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Les Watters, Curator
Columbia County Museum Association