

February 8, 2024

Senate Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for SB 1517 – Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District

Chair Manning Jr., Vice-Chair Thatcher, Senators Gorsek, Linthicum, and Woods:

Thank you for your consideration of SB 1517, a crucial bill to ensure we can support the operations of the Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District. Every year, there is a 10 percent chance of a major flood along the lower Columbia River in Multnomah County, and the risk only grows as climate change and rising sea levels continue to impact river conditions. This area not only includes the Portland International Airport and Oregon's second largest source of drinking water, it is also home to nearly 8,000 residents and 2,500 businesses that generate at least 59,000 jobs and \$16 billion in annual economic activity and associated revenue for the State.

In 2019, the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill 431, creating the Urban Flood Safety & Water Quality District (UFSWQD), a new special district to manage the levees, pump stations, and conveyances that reduce the risk of flooding along the Columbia River in northern Multnomah County. The legislation was introduced at the request of Levee Ready Columbia, a regional partnership of public, private, and nonprofit organizations of which we were a member. In 2022, the Legislature stepped up again to pass HB 4067, which clarified the governance of the district and gave it additional financial tools.

These laws are foundational to putting a more modern, environmentally friendly, and financially sustainable governance structure in place to protect people and property from flooding, prepare for climate change, and contribute to the health of the river and the watershed.

Passing SB 1517 is the critical next step we must take to modernize this important infrastructure, improve flood safety for an area critical to the region's future, and take a more holistic approach to the management of this historic floodplain. SB 1517 will provide the district with fair and sustainable ways to pay for ongoing operations and capital improvements.

I urge your support for SB 1517.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Stegmann".

Commissioner Lori Stegmann
District 4, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners