

**Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager**

**In Support of SB 1517**

**Senate Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World  
Affairs Committee**

**February 8, 2024**



Metro is pleased to support Senate Bill 1517 which provides the financial tools necessary to facilitate critical solutions for protecting our levee system along the Columbia River.

Metro is the elected, regional government of the Portland metropolitan area. Together with local government and community organizations, we have been actively engaged in efforts to address flood safety issues related to the Columbia River levee system along the Columbia Corridor in urban Multnomah County. We serve on the PEN 1 Board, the SDIC Board, the Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District (UFSWQD) and participate in the Levee Ready Columbia partnership. These organizations and partnerships are a collaborative effort focused on meeting federal levee requirements and creating a strong and functioning system.

As the initial Board has begun to stand up the new district and identify a long-term revenue solution, they have been confronted with political, technical and feasibility issues with the revenue tools available to them. SB 1517 seeks to resolve this by adding two additional financial tools for the UFSWQD to utilize: property assessments and flood safety benefit fee. Both revenue solutions will be used for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the levee system and have the support of municipal partners including Metro.

Fixing and maintaining the levee system will protect significant assets that serve our region as well as the entire state. The levees protect the Portland International Airport, the Oregon Air National Guard, Oregon's second largest water supply source and 48,000 jobs producing \$16 billion of economic activity. In addition, there are 7,400 residents living behind the levees, including many vulnerable populations, as well as important wildlife habitat in need of restoration. All of this requires a functioning and strong levee system, and this bill will allow us to continue this important and critical work to ensure the functionality and longevity of the levee, region and state.