



February 16, 2024

Chairs Girod and Holvey and members of the committee-

The Oregon Education Association representing the 41,000 educators throughout the state is in support for the proposed infrastructure bond aimed at addressing the critical state of our community's school buildings. This proposal, with its vision to match a community bond, presents a beacon of hope and a tangible path toward revitalizing our educational facilities, which, as we know, are in a state of severe dilapidation.

Education is the cornerstone of a thriving society, and the environments in which our children learn play a pivotal role in shaping their future. Unfortunately, the current state of our school buildings in the Gervais School District—plagued by structural issues, outdated facilities, and a general lack of resources—stands as a significant barrier to our community's growth and the well-being of our students to have a healthy learning space. It is disheartening to see the places meant to inspire and nurture young minds in such a state of disrepair, not because of unwillingness, but because the amount of available funds to repair and improve these structures.

Gervis School district is a small, rural town that currently serves 900 students, which receive 100% free lunch and their student body is made up of 85% students of color. The school district itself is a hub of the community as not only a gathering place, but as the largest employer. This proposal would ensure that the residents can continue using the cafeteria for critical services, at times for food and shelter. The proposed infrastructure match represents more than just a financial investment in bricks and mortar; it symbolizes a commitment to our children's future and the broader vision of our community's prosperity. By matching with community funds, we not only leverage financial resources but also foster a sense of shared responsibility and collective action towards improving our educational landscape.

The benefits of revitalizing our school infrastructure extend far beyond the immediate aesthetic improvements. Modern, safe, and well-equipped educational facilities can dramatically enhance the learning experience, improve student engagement and achievement, and attract dedicated and talented educators. Moreover, schools that stand as proud representations of their communities can instill a sense of pride and belonging among students, fostering a positive and inclusive school culture.

This bond is a call to action for all of us who believe in the transformative power of education. By supporting this proposal, we have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of countless students and pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future. It is a testament to our collective resolve to not only address the urgent needs of today but to invest in the promise of tomorrow.

I urge you to join the Oregon Education Association in supporting this critical infrastructure proposal. Together, we can turn the tide on years of neglect and chart a new course for our schools—one that leads to excellence, equity, and empowerment for every student in our community.

Thank you for considering this vital proposal. Our children, our educators, and our future depend on the choices we make today. Let us choose to invest in a legacy of education, opportunity, and hope.