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Address
1939 SW Morrison St.
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February 15, 2024

Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

RE: Support for HB 5201 & HB 5202 Eugene Emeralds Multi Use Facility

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing today on behalf of Sport Oregon to express our strong support and encourage you to recommend investment in the multi-use facility anchored by the Eugene Emeralds within the Lane County Fairgrounds revitalization project that could also serve as a part of our emergency response infrastructure.

Sport Oregon- Oregon's Sport Commission is a 501c 6-member organization with over 125 like-minded companies and individuals who see sports as an engine for economic development. It also operates a 501c 3 foundation that provides grants and conducts programs to support youth sports, with an emphasis on both underserved youth, young girls and increased physical activity.

Sport Oregon maintains strong relationships with local, regional and state tourist and business associations to effectively drive and contribute to the economic development & recovery efforts impacting the state through sports tourism and the sports industry ecosystem.

Data has shown that sports tourism is an integral part of local and national economies across the US. Travelers attending sports tournaments, races, and other events – either as a participant or spectator represent a critical driver of the overall economy.

Sports ETA, the only trade association for the sports events and tourism industry, in its annual State of the Industry Report for 2021 cited the sports tourism sector's direct spending impact in the U.S. of \$39.7 billion and generated a total economic impact of \$91.8 billion. The sector supports 635,000 full-time and part-time jobs and generates \$12.9 billion in taxes.

The Lane County Fairgrounds and the Eugene Emeralds are the cornerstones for community entertainment that brings urban and rural Lane County residents together. Both are facing tough decisions that will greatly impact their relevance as community treasurers.

Major League Baseball has told the Emeralds that if they don't build a stadium to their standards by 2024, the team will be moved to another community or cease to exist at all, resulting in hundreds of lost jobs, local vendor revenue, and entertainment options.



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The continued budget drain to maintain the aging buildings and infrastructure at the Lane County Fairgrounds has been well-documented and reported. In its current condition, the Fairgrounds will continue to struggle to maximize the opportunities to provide the year-round entertainment and employment that county residents want and expect from a public venue.

As if investing in these two community cornerstones wasn't enough, the development of a multi-use facility on the Lane County Fairgrounds property has the potential to be a real win-win-win for our community as it will be built to immediate occupancy standards which will allow it to be used by our entire region as an emergency shelter in the case of a major earthquake, wildfire, or other disaster. A facility like this is desperately needed in the community and will serve as a critical piece of emergency preparedness infrastructure for when, not if, a disaster strikes.

The proposed public-private partnership that could transform a key property in the heart of the community could be made possible with the support of leaders like you. The economic impact of this team and of a new facility is significant, losing the team would be devastating to the local and regional communities- in fact the state of Oregon as well.

We respectfully request that you recommend funding this multi-use facility that significantly updates the Lane County Fairgrounds, keeps the Eugene Emeralds in the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area, and provides a critical safe-haven for residents in our region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Etzel". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jim Etzel

CEO, Sport Oregon