

To the honorable Senators and Representatives in the Oregon Legislature,

Last December, I had the pleasure of attending the 10th annual Hillsboro Hops Fund Banquet. My personal highlight that evening was seeing the local students highlighted who were able to receive scholarships from the Hops, many of whom are going to be the first in their families to attend college. In total, the event raised over \$100,000 for local education, youth sports, and cultural causes — a reason for celebration by any measure.

But walking out of the banquet, I couldn't help but think of the worst-case scenario: What will happen to this community if the Hops go away next year. Hillsboro can't afford to lose the Hops

That's the unfortunate reality facing our beloved baseball team. Without final funding from the state of Oregon for a new ballpark that meets Major League Baseball facility standards, Hillsboro will lose the Hops. It's heartbreaking to imagine this city going backwards and relinquishing such a force for good in our community.

I helped bring the Hops from Yakima to Hillsboro in 2013 in my role as a city councilor. Since then, I've been a loyal season ticket holder and haven't missed a season opener. I'm on a first-name basis with hundreds of fans, staff and players who I see most summer evenings at Ron Tonkin Field. Together, we've cheered this team on to three league championships. Everywhere you go, you see Hops hats, shirts and bumper stickers. It's been absolutely thrilling to see the Hops grow into a central part of Hillsboro's identity.

Growing up in this region, I still remember the stigma that plagued Hillsboro. We were always looked at as merely a suburb of Portland, lacking the city's magnetic draw and the luster of other well-appointed neighboring communities. No longer. Today, I can go weeks without traveling east of 185th. Hillsboro is a dynamic and diverse metropolis with a thriving economy and growing population

Amidst this evolution, one of our unifying forces has been the Hillsboro Hops and what they've meant to our region, and it's so much more than only baseball. Hops games include wedding proposals, birthday parties for the young and old alike, STEM days that bring out kids in droves, military appreciations, Latino and LGTBQ+ outings that celebrate equity and culture, high school garage bands playing the national anthem in front of their biggest-ever crowds, and youth athletes cheering on players approaching the height of their professional dreams.

As a year-round outdoor entertainment venue with greater capacity, the new Hops ballpark will include even more opportunities for sports, concerts, cultural celebrations and other events that bring us together as a unique, diverse and thriving community. I can also remember rooting for my son's Century High School baseball team, and his club being unable to play even one home game due to the substandard field being underwater. (We had to use the football stadium instead.) These days, the turf fields at Gordon Faber are used around the clock by our exceptional crop of amateur athletes.

I'm thrilled that the Hops' plans for a new ballpark include additional spaces at the complex for youth sports, and furthermore, will ensure the city retains Ron Tonkin Field as a dedicated community field — by far the best of its kind in the region. Imagine Hillsboro being featured on ESPN hosting the 2026 Little League World Series! And Portland State University Softball is getting a whole new venue with actual stands for the fans at the park! In 10 short years, the Hops have earned their place as an integral part of Hillsboro that represents so much more than just baseball. After coming this far, it would be truly tragic to lose this organization and all that they mean and give to our community.

The investment from the State of Oregon is vital to the Hops. It is even more vital to our sense of community. We aren't just an ag community or 'that' industrial community. The Hops provide a living room for all to come together. And this stadium will benefit all. Thank you.