Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCOE)

Letters of Support - February 2025

- Special Districts Association of Oregon
- League of Oregon Cities
- Technology Association of Oregon
- City of Hillsboro, Oregon

To: Member of the Joint Committee on Information Management and Technology

From: Frank Stratton, Executive Director
Special Districts Association of Oregon

Date: February 28, 2025

Re: Support for the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence

I am writing on behalf of the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) to express our strong support for the continued funding of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE). The OCCoE is a critical initiative that will significantly enhance the cybersecurity capabilities of Oregon's special districts, which include a diverse range of public service entities such as water districts, fire districts, ports, transit, hospitals, and public utility districts.

Cybersecurity threats are becoming increasingly sophisticated and pervasive, posing significant risks to the essential services provided by our special districts. These entities often operate with limited resources and may lack the specialized expertise required to effectively defend against cyberattacks. Of the nearly 1,000 Oregon special districts, nearly 400 operate entirely with volunteers. Of the districts with paid staff, we estimate only 5% have full-time information technology staff. The OCCoE will serve as a centralized resource, offering much-needed support, training, and guidance to bolster the cybersecurity defenses of these vital public service organizations.

The benefits of the OCCoE to Oregon's special districts are manifold:

1. **Enhanced Security Posture:** By providing access to cutting-edge cybersecurity tools, best practices, and threat intelligence, the OCCoE will help special districts proactively identify and mitigate potential cyber threats.
2. **Training and Education:** The OCCoE will offer specialized training programs tailored to the unique needs of special districts, ensuring that staff are well-equipped to handle cybersecurity challenges and respond effectively to incidents.
3. **Collaboration and Information Sharing:** The OCCoE will facilitate collaboration and information sharing among special districts and other local governments, fostering a community of practice that can collectively address common cybersecurity issues and share solutions.
4. **Incident Response Support:** In the event of a cyber incident, the OCCoE will provide expert guidance and support to help special districts quickly recover and minimize the impact on their operations and the communities they serve.

5. **Cost Efficiency:** By centralizing resources and expertise, the OCCoE will enable special districts to access high-quality cybersecurity services at a fraction of the cost of developing these capabilities independently.
6. **Workforce Development:** The OCCoE's mission to expand workforce development through the university system has the multiplied impact of increasing a crucial supply of cybersecurity professionals while deploying students in the program to assist Oregon's local governments with their cybersecurity consulting needs.

The establishment of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence is a forward-thinking initiative that will play a crucial role in safeguarding the critical infrastructure and services provided by Oregon's special districts. We urge the Oregon Joint Committee on Information Management and Technology to support this important endeavor and ensure that our special districts have the resources they need to protect against evolving cyber threats.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Stratton
Executive Director

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Jeff Merkley

U.S. House Senate

531 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support – Portland State University FY 2026 Funding Request

Dear Senator Jeff Merkley:

On behalf of the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), I write to express our support for Portland State University's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 community project funding request to create a training program on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence awareness and resilience. This request has the ability to spur greater innovation and awareness throughout Oregon and support cities and local industry partners who will benefit from this investment.

PSU's request would include nine one-day-long virtual introductory cybersecurity seminars followed by advanced certificate options: (a) a 12-week non-credit cybersecurity resilience certificate (at no cost) at Portland State University or a selection of industry-based for-fee certificates with available scholarships. Participants will have opportunities to engage in tabletop exercises, cyber range simulations, and interactions with practitioners and trainers from Oregon Guard, CISA, FBI, and private sector partner companies.

The creation of this training program will continue to strengthen the strong partnership between Oregon cities, the LOC, and Portland State University. We are committed to partnering with local academic partners, like PSU, to invest in initiatives that enhance the quality of life in our cities and bring innovative opportunities for our local industries and residents.

Thank you for your consideration of PSU's FY 2026 community project funding request and we hope the Committee includes it in the appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Nolan Pleše

Lobbyist, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC)

February 13, 2025

The Honorable Ron Wyden

U.S. House Senate

211 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support – Portland State University FY 2026 Funding Request

Dear Senator Ron Wyden:

On behalf of the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), I write to express our support for Portland State University's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 community project funding request to create a training program on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence awareness and resilience. This request has the ability to spur greater innovation and awareness throughout Oregon and support cities and local industry partners who will benefit from this investment.

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The creation of this training program will continue to strengthen the strong partnership between Oregon cities, the LOC, and Portland State University. We are committed to partnering with local academic partners, like PSU, to invest in initiatives that enhance the quality of life in our cities and bring innovative opportunities for our local industries and residents.

Thank you for your consideration of PSU's FY 2026 community project funding request and we hope the Committee includes it in the appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Nolan Pleše

Lobbyist, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC)

Nolan Pleše | Lobbyist – League of Oregon Cities (LOC) | nplese@orcities.org | 971-428-7278

February 9, 2025

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. House Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
U.S. House Senate
211 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support – Portland State University FY 2026 Funding Request

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley:

On behalf of the Technology Association of Oregon (TAO), I write to express support for Portland State University's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 community project funding request to create a training program on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence awareness and resilience. This request has the ability to spur greater innovation in Portland and support local industry partners who will benefit from this investment.

PSU's request would include nine one-day-long virtual introductory cybersecurity seminars followed by advanced certificate options: (a) a 12 week non-credit cybersecurity resilience certificate (at no cost) at Portland State University or a selection of industry-based for-fee certificates with available scholarships. Participants will have opportunities to engage in tabletop exercises, cyber range simulations, and interactions with practitioners and trainers from Oregon Guard, CISA, FBI, and private sector partner companies.

The creation of this training program will continue to strengthen the strong partnership between TAO and Portland State University. We are committed to partnering with local academic partners, like PSU, to invest in initiatives that enhance the quality of life and bring innovative opportunities for our local industry and residents.

Thank you for your consideration of PSU's FY 2026 community project funding request and we hope the Committee includes it in the appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Skip Newberry
President & CEO, TAO
skip.newberry@techoregon.org

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Jeff Merkley   The Honorable Ron Wyden
U.S. House Senate   U.S. House Senate
531 Hart Senate Office Building   211 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510   Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Letter of Support – Portland State University FY 2026 Funding Request

Dear Honorable Senators Wyden and Merkley:

On behalf of the City of Hillsboro, I write to express support for Portland State University's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 community project funding request to create a training program on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence awareness and resilience. This request will create the ability to spur greater innovation and support local partners who will benefit from this investment.

PSU's request would include funds for a 3-year project to create pathways to build awareness of and training in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence through a community-based approach supporting private and public entities including local and county governments, special districts, nonprofit organizations, education service districts, school districts and public libraries. Participants will have opportunities to engage in community-based tabletop exercises, cyber range simulations, and interactions with practitioners and trainers from Oregon Guard, CISA, FBI, and private sector partner companies.

The creation of this training program will continue to strengthen the strong partnership between the City of Hillsboro and Portland State University. We are committed to partnering with local academic partners, like PSU, to invest in initiatives that enhance the quality of life and bring innovative opportunities for our local industry and residents.

Thank you for your consideration of PSU's FY 2026 community project funding request and we hope the Committee includes it in the appropriations bills.

Sincerely,

Beach Pace
Mayor