

March 25, 2025

I am writing in opposition to SB 110.

Higher Priority Public Financing Needs

At this moment, Oregon faces numerous crises that could benefit from greater public financing, including profound needs for financing related to affordable housing, and public infrastructure to support housing development, and sustainability initiatives.

We also face a time in which federal funding is at unprecedented risk. Even if the legislature wishes to make an investment in Portland's local entertainment economy, consider that many existing local non-profits that are part of our current existing cultural economy may soon find themselves fighting just to stay alive if they are not already.

Tying up available funds to subsidize stadium financing based on vague promises of growth is not a responsible move, even in the best of conditions. Stadium backers may commit future income taxes toward repayment, but are we expected to believe those employees won't use public services in all that time? This proposal is still a public subsidy, just dressed up for a costume party. We should be using our public subsidies to support higher priority goals and existing organizations.

It does not seem at all likely that this would be the last ask for public dollars: a stadium of this size will inevitably demand public infrastructure investments, even where it's not clear that those investments would dovetail with broader community needs for safe transportation modes and improving failing systems.

Lack of Commitment to Community Investment

This bill fails to secure even the twinkling of a Community Benefits Agreement or similar mechanism to ensure the often-touted promises of benefits from development projects materialize for those who need them most. The classic CBA example is the Staples Center development in L.A.

A Community Benefits Agreement could better ensure outcomes like local employment and job training, committing to transportation systems that also benefit local neighborhoods, integrated plans for affordable housing, or commitment to environmental justice targets. If public dollars are allocated, then the legislature is responsible for ensuring that broader public interests are addressed.

Far from securing community benefits, this bill fails to even wrangle even basic transparency from backers.

Looking Backwards

Ultimately, this bill fails to represent the interests of more than a very narrow population. You can find ample discussion on either side about whether baseball is dying or just managing to hold steady, whether it's uniquely declining in popularity with younger generations, or if that decline in popularity is part of some more general trend. Either way you slice it though, an investment in baseball cannot be characterized as a forward-looking investment.

Thank you,
Tabitha Boschetti; Portland, OR 97215