

Submitter: Barbara Kahl
On Behalf Of: Oregon taxpayers
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB110

Senate Bill 110 (SB 110) proposes using public funds to support a new baseball stadium in Oregon, but this plan unfairly burdens taxpayers when the real beneficiaries—baseball team owners—have more than enough wealth to foot the bill themselves. Major League Baseball (MLB) team owners are among the richest individuals in sports, often billionaires with vast personal fortunes and revenue streams from ticket sales, merchandise, and lucrative media deals. Forcing Oregon taxpayers to subsidize their latest vanity project is not just unnecessary—it's unjust.

Take, for example, the typical MLB owner profile: Forbes reported that in 2023, the average MLB team was worth \$2.32 billion, with owners like John Henry (Boston Red Sox, \$4 billion net worth) and Mark Lerner (Washington Nationals, tied to a \$5 billion family empire) exemplifying the financial elite behind these franchises. These owners don't need handouts; they have the capital to build their own stadiums. A new field might cost \$1 billion, a fraction of their collective wealth, yet SB 110 shifts that expense onto Oregonians—many of whom may never even attend a game.

Public funding for private sports ventures has a shaky track record. Studies, like those from the Brookings Institution, consistently show that stadiums rarely deliver the economic booms promised, leaving taxpayers with debt and maintenance costs while owners rake in profits. Oregon's working families shouldn't bear this risk for a luxury entertainment project. If team owners want a shiny new field, let them open their own wallets—after all, they're the ones reaping the long-term rewards.

Opponents of SB 110 argue it's a corporate welfare scheme dressed up as community investment. The state has pressing needs—education, healthcare, infrastructure—that deserve funding over a playground for the ultra-rich. Baseball owners have the resources; they don't need Oregonians to bail them out.

Name one successful business that wants others to pay for their buildings and maintenance so they don't have to be held accountable for potential failure. That thought alone should bring enough skepticism of intent in the long run to not move forward.

SB 110 despite feeling good on first read through, is truly a nightmare. Portland is much too small to sustain a professional baseball team. They've tried in the past funding professional teams, an NFL bid. Economics in Oregon cannot sustain a team. Long term costs, a study of the true economics of this scenario, have not been researched. Its unrealistic given Portland's new reputation as the fentanyl capital of

the US with a failing economy, highest crime rate in the nation, and unanswered homelessness concerns. Fix those problems first.

Lawmakers should reject SB 110 and demand these billionaires pay their own way, not saddle taxpayers with the bill. Oregon has more important issues to tackle.

Sincerely,

Dr Barbara J Kahl DVM