

Submitter: Marc Berg
On Behalf Of: Alameda Schoolyard Project
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Attn: Senator Kate Lieber - District 14
Attn: Representative Tawna D. Sanchez - District 43
Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means - 2025 Regular Session

First of all, thank you for your willingness travel to La Grande and host this public hearing. Our little city of Ontario may be at the eastern end of Oregon, but there are a myriad of organizations who rely on your support. I would like to add my voice to those you will hear on April 11th.

We have attempted to coordinate services and amenities to Ontario and Malheur County for a large number of students and adults. This collaboration for the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard project has been a way for several organizations to fill a number of needs at one location. An investment at Alameda Elementary is critically important to cover funding for a centralized location.

The Ontario School District, Ontario Recreation District, and the Ontario Parks Committee have all found the site to be an important "campus" of activity. From high school sports, to summer camps, public fitness areas, and even adult soccer leagues all gather at this location. We thought that the plans for the rural schoolyard would be the means to filling the needs of Ontario. The funding is the critical missing piece, after years of outreach, design work, and fundraising.

The 2025-27 Co-Chair Budget Framework says that you are guided by the following principles, such as: Protecting core services and prioritizing investments in key areas. Alameda is certainly a key area for learning, playing, and social interaction. If your total available discretionary resources of \$39.7 billion, this is where I would wholeheartedly endorse as a key area with core services.

I am employed with the Planning Department of Malheur County. I am also a volunteer with the Kiwanis Club, the city Parks Committee, the local school's Site Council, and other advisory panels for Ontario. I am an Oregon transplant, but I want more than anything to make our city and county appealing and livable. There are so many here in such need. The needs are reflected in the student body. The outdoor areas have minimal amenities and not always safe. A huge concern is the lack of shade during high school soccer matches.

What I love about the Rural Community Schoolyard Program was how it will benefit students, teachers, and community members. Alameda Elementary came together

with community members for input on design ideas. With the right funding, we will see a "campus" of gardens, trees, local artwork, and accessible play equipment.

These can honestly be called outdated schoolyards. We all would love to see green spaces, learning areas, and athletic venues, which make for an appealing destination. The health and educational benefits will be for all community members. Because they will have access to Alameda for picnics, walking, sports, and learning. Countless parents and neighbors use the walking path around the school on a regular basis. Our Rec District holds a number of camps and tournaments here as well.

We are asking for a \$1.5 million investment into the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program. The amount will cover three different schoolyards. Our Alameda Elementary would be renovated for use by Malheur county residents.

I consider this investment small, in comparison to other requests you will be hearing. However, I know that putting dollars into our little Ontario town will not only be an investment into the Rural Community Schoolyard. This investment will be for the future of Eastern Oregonians, who could always find another state to live in, but stay for all reasons mentioned above.

Thank you.

Marc R. Berg
Malheur County Planning Department
Marc.Berg@MalheurCo.org
541-473-5185 office
541-709-1260 cell
251 B Street West
Vale, OR 97918