



DATE: March 31, 2025
TO: The Joint Committee on Ways and Means
FROM: The Bend Chamber of Commerce
RE: Testimony supporting Oregon State University-Cascades Student Health & Recreation Center from the General Fund to the Emergency Board for allocations during the biennium

On behalf of more than 1,750 members and 8,500 businesses in Central Oregon, the Bend Chamber of Commerce supports Oregon State University-Cascades campus' request for \$42 million in state support for the construction of a student health and recreation center on the Bend/Central Oregon campus.

Our region must have a robust and sustainable pipeline of a future workforce, including graduates from OSU-Cascades. We also advocate that students who wish to complete their college degrees have the assistance, support, facilities, and services necessary to help them complete their college degrees. Facilities and services to support physical and mental health are common at universities. The Cascades campus is the only public university campus without these essential facilities in Oregon.

The data are clear on the direct connection between physical and mental wellness and the students who complete their college degree. Data from the Journal of College Student Retention has shown a two percent increase in five-year graduation rates, and up to eight percent more retention of first-generation students who face significantly more challenges completing their college degrees.

The students believe this facility is so important that they have committed to paying \$20 million in fees to help pay for the center. Oregon State University is also putting skin in the game, paying an additional \$22 million, covering 50 percent of the project cost between the students and university participation. With the State of Oregon's investment to fund the second half, these students will have the physical and mental services they require to have healthy, successful college careers.

We urge the Joint Committee on Ways and Means to approve \$42 million for our Central Oregon students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Katy Brooks
CEO/President