

Submitter: Rebecca Stricker
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the committee,

My name is Rebecca Stricker, and I am the Director of Malheur County Health Department. I appreciate this opportunity to show my support of HB 5006. My parents were raised in this community and they chose to remain here and raise me and my three sisters. While I love our community, it is not difficult to see the critical need we have for safe, healthy green spaces. A place to provide an opportunity for community members to access for recreation, exercise, family gatherings, and more.

The Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program works hand in hand with students, teachers, and community members to transform outdated schoolyards into vibrant green spaces that reflect the community's goals and local cultures. Renovating these schoolyards isn't just critical for students, who will gain health and educational benefits, but for the entire community, who will have access to these schoolyards for youth sports and recreation, picnics, birthday parties, and so much more.

This legislative session, a \$1.5 million investment into the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program would cover gaps in funding for three different K-5 schoolyard projects in Madras, Ontario, and Riddle, Oregon. This \$1.5M investment would allow all three schoolyards to be renovated to reflect the community's vision for a vibrant, accessible green space.

In my community, the Alameda Elementary schoolyard would be renovated. Residents from all over Malheur county visit the schoolyard and the adjacent Alameda Park for youth sports and recreation. While the schoolyard has lots of space to run around, it has limited, unsafe, and outdated play equipment and almost no shade. Alameda Elementary students and community members have already come together and created a design for a new schoolyard brimming with interactive play equipment, a pollinator garden, art by local artists, and accessible amenities.

Not only is this updated schoolyard meaningful to me and my family on a personal level, but it will be a huge benefit to our community as well. As the Public Health Director, I am responsible for overseeing community health, and safeguarding the public's well-being. A safe and accessible space can significantly enhance the physical and mental health of our community by promoting physical activity, and foster social connections.

This investment is small compared to other requests this committee will hear today, but it will have a mighty impact on Malheur, Douglas, and Jefferson counties. I urge your support for investing \$1.5 million dollars into the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard, to cover funding gaps for three different rural K-5 schoolyard renovations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rebecca Stricker, RN
Director--Malheur County Health Department