

Submitter: TAMMY VOGT
On Behalf Of: Local Investment - Alameda Elementary Schoolyard
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Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Testimony – Ways & Means Roadshow

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the committee, my name is Tammy Vogt and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I live in Ontario, Oregon, and I traveled here to advocate for an investment that is close to my heart and vital to my community.

I've lived in Ontario collectively for over 25 years—raising my family and building a career in this beautifully diverse rural place. I know my community well, and I deeply desire good things for it and its people.

The Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program partners with students, educators, and local voices to transform outdated schoolyards into vibrant green spaces that reflect each community's goals and culture. These renovations benefit students—and the broader community—offering safe, accessible spaces for sports, play, connection, and creativity.

This session, I'm asking for your support of a \$1.5 million dollar investment to fill funding gaps for three rural schoolyard projects—in Ontario, Madras, and Riddle. Each community has done the work of dreaming, designing, fundraising, and organizing. Now they need this final investment to bring their visions to life.

In Ontario, the schoolyard at Alameda Elementary would be transformed. Today, it offers little more than space to run, with outdated and unsafe equipment and almost no shade. But our students and community members have already co-created a design full of interactive play features, a pollinator garden, art by local artists, and accessible pathways.

Imagine with me, if you will, a community park—unlike anything the children and families in my area have ever experienced.

A space filled with imaginative, inclusive play—equipment that's commonplace in more resourced communities, but completely unfamiliar in our area. Musical instruments built into the park. Creative design elements that reflect the land, the culture, and the spirit of our corner of the world. A place that invites everyone to belong, to move, to play.

In the Ontario area—and in communities like ours—there's often this quiet feeling... that “we don't get nice things.” That somehow, beautiful, thoughtful spaces aren't meant for us. But I don't believe that.

I believe, and I know you all do too, that our children are just as worthy of dreaming, playing, and growing in environments that inspire them. I believe our community—and the two others represented in this project—deserve to be seen and celebrated as

vital to the story of our state.

These parks aren't just about play—they are about hope, dignity, and visibility. And you have the opportunity to help make it real.

This investment is incredibly important to my community. That's why I've helped organize a local sign-on letter of support, urging the Legislature to allocate these funds. Thirty-five residents have signed on so far—including our mayor, Debbie Folden—and we'll deliver the letter to this committee on April 16.

This may be a relatively small ask compared to others you'll hear today—but it promises a mighty impact for the communities of Malheur, Jefferson, and Douglas 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.