

May 7, 2025

Dear Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee

My name is Tracy Welch and I am providing a letter of support for the Siletz Valley School Revitalization and Safety Improvements project requested by our school community. We have waited a long time to be able to improve our school which is the hub of our community. We are unable to apply for grants, or bonds due to our charter status and we do not own the land which once belonged to the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. By rule, our sponsoring school district bond dollars cannot be given to us. I have lived in this community for over 30 years and pay property taxes in Lincoln County this rule I find unfair.

We are a K-12 charter which means of the provided state school funds, we automatically have 20% of our funds held back by the district (by rule, whether or not a district takes the money is a choice and not required by statute).

Money for maintenance and upgrades is hard to come by, keeping the aging building, built in 1934, operating takes all of our facilities dollars. This is why we are asking you to support our request.

Celebrating our Accomplishments and Future:

We are home to the 2025 Small Schools Teacher of the Year, staff who have been working at the school their entire careers, a top notch indigenous culture program, woodshop and culinary programs that are recognized as some of the best, an independent farm to table program with our tribe, local ocean seafood program with local businesses, free food program for our community, and students who are learning to live in community with others. We offer robotics, drones, computer aided design and CNC, agriscience and oyster farming. We partner with OSU SMILE, Hatfield Marine Science Center, Yakona Education programs, Oregon Coast Community College, Young Entrepreneur Program (we have a finalist this year), OBOB, VEX Robotics and Drone Competitions. We are hardworking, proud of who we are, what we want to accomplish, and we need your help. Please realize we only have 24 students in our 2025 graduating class, and this level of engagement between community and schools is unparalleled for a school our size.

We are one community- the City of Siletz, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, and all the people who work and live here, or nearby. We want to provide our children a place to learn where they feel safe, comfortable, and excited to learn. Currently, classroom heating is either on or off, and requires each teacher to radio the facilities staff to turn it off when it gets too warm. There is no Air Conditioning in the building (except for three small classrooms in the annex.) The lights in the gym are old and if a light is broken, we will have to close the gym due to hazardous waste concerns from the light fixtures. The gym bathrooms are not accessible to our elders and those in wheelchairs and we want to upgrade them as soon as possible. There are no dedicated science labs, and pipes are broken in several classrooms. There are holes in siding that allow wind and rain into several buildings. The roofs leak, and internet access is sporadic and make uninterrupted state testing sessions a challenge.

Staff and students want and need safety upgrades like stronger classroom doors and locks that prevent unwanted and unsafe actors from entering our school and classrooms. We want more

for our children and we need your help. We have, thanks to our culinary program, a portable kitchen to feed our community in case of a catastrophic event, but without a generator, we cannot keep our children safe and warm as they await reunification with their families.

Funding our project will allow us to provide another 30-50 years of education in our community. We are ready to start working on the project, and would find no greater satisfaction than knowing that you, as state leaders, care about our struggles, hopes and dreams for the future of your children. You have collectively done so much for so many children, and now we need your help.

Sincerely,

Tracy Welch

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