



## **SB 1501: Blazers/Moda Center**

### **EMO Urges an Agreement with Allen Family Foundation to Invest Sales Proceeds in Oregon, and Urges a State or Public-Private Non-Management, Non-Equity “Location Stake” in the Blazers**

February 11, 2026

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Starr and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Britt Conroy, and I am with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

**The Blazers contribute to our sense of community as Oregonians, and to the cultural and economic vibrancy of our state.** The Blazers are a source of pure joy, of sorrow, of hope. As an organization connected to hundreds of thousands of people of faith through roughly 750 places of worship across Oregon, EMO readily admits that on some days, there may be more praying happening inside the Moda Center than inside even Oregon’s largest churches.

**We also know that Oregon is already failing to meet the needs of so many of our neighbors, and that a series of budget cuts are barreling down on us all.** Many Oregonians will suffer in the years ahead as this body makes difficult choices.

With that, we want to offer two suggestions that could be incorporated into this bill, but more importantly we believe need to be points of discussion between the people of Oregon, our elected leaders, Jody Allen and the incoming Blazers ownership.

**First, we encourage Oregon and Jody Allen to develop a plan where the Allen Family Foundation invests all of the more than \$4 billion in sales proceeds back into Oregon**

**and Southwest Washington, from Lower Albina to Lakeview and everywhere in between.** We would love to see the sale of a beloved community's sports franchise by a charitable organization result in \$4 billion of community good.

**Second, while an Arena Fund may be the most politically likely scenario, it feels precarious.** As the owners weigh whether to keep the Blazers in Portland or move the team elsewhere, Oregon leaders, taxpayers and those who depend on crucial state programs would be making an offering to the new owners, asking for mercy and hoping for the best.

**We urge our elected officials, prominent wealthy Oregonians and business leaders to attempt to negotiate a "location stake" in the team.** This would not be a management or equity stake, but rather a one-time payment inserting Oregonians into the ownership group where the state's only role and responsibility would be as the sole and permanent decision-maker regarding where the team is located.

This would clearly decrease the value of the team in the eyes of the new owners, and a location stake would be based on that lost value.

If the new owners, as they claim, have no intention of moving the team, then such a deal would be a windfall – money earned for doing something they were going to do anyway. If they refuse to consider the offer, that could be telling. Sometimes, you just have to call the question.

**Together, Oregon paying to secure a location stake in the Blazers and having the Allen Family Foundation invest sale proceeds into our communities would keep the Blazers in town and help meet the needs of struggling Oregonians.**

**Our final suggestions:**

**- Ensure arena employees employees are paid a living wage** and receive a fair benefits package. The expertise and labor of these Oregonians are an indispensable component to the operation of the Moda Center, and therefore to the community-building and on-court success of the Blazers.

**- As a statewide organization, we urge the new owners of the Blazers to find ways to bring the positive economic impact of the organization to all corners of our state.** One way to do so: Hold rotating exhibition or preseason games at *all* of Oregon's public colleges and universities, from Corvallis to Ashland, La Grande to Klamath Falls. In the 1990s, the Blazers and Sonics played annual exhibition games at Gill Coliseum at OSU.

**- Look to partner with the State of Washington,** our respective Congressional delegations and businesses that operate in both of our states to secure complimentary sports wins. Perhaps there is a world where, in a fiscally responsible way and through expansion of both

sports leagues, Washington helps Oregon land a Major League Baseball team, and Oregon helps Washington get their own NBA team, not ours. Again, in a fiscally responsible way.

Thank you.