

February 12, 2026

Senate Committee on Rules:

We writing in opposition to SB 1501 and the plan to dedicate the State's general obligation capacity to sports arenas at a time of tremendous economic difficulty and nationwide upheaval. Private sports franchises and their well-heeled owners should pay their own way, and government bond support should be focused on broader public infrastructure benefits like fixing our bridges, filling gaps in our transportation budget, patching our healthcare system, and any number of other public services.

We are at a time of federal upheaval where states need to be increasingly self-reliant, while facing down a crisis of transportation infrastructure, affordable housing, healthcare access, and failing infrastructure. We are Portlanders who believe in our City's capacity to thrive in the face of this adversity, but know that will mean focusing on public services and investments that benefit the broadest range of community members, not bankrolling private corporations and sports franchises.

We hear the argument that this bill doesn't allocate budget money but sets up the scaffolding for a new ownership model that sets the stage for general obligation bonds.

To this we say:

- First, our general obligation bond capacity is not infinite. GO bonds obligate future money that we will need to pay for services.
- Moda Center workers, performers, construction crews, and others still use City and State services. Their kids go to school. They travel. They need healthcare. Allocating their tax dollars as if mystically constrained to the Moda Center ignores the need to continue allocating this revenue to critical service needs.
- If the money collected from the Moda Center still isn't enough to pay for funds spent on the Moda Center, the general budget will be hit again, robbing money from critical services twice over.
- This bill provides no guardrails in terms of the amount of money that could be bonded. The State should not be committing to this project without financial guardrails limiting investment.
- This will obligate the entire State to commit to a project with no commitments from the private sports franchise owner(s) now in place. At minimum you would think you'd get a commitment before pursuing legislation.
- This bill provides no guardrails for the extent of the lease commitment being sought. Without even the glimmer of a meaningful commitment, this is flushing money away.
- The bill provides no guardrails to secure community benefits or living wages associated with further investments.
- The claims that Moda-Center-related revenue will pay for these bonds undercuts the argument that the Moda Center generates economic benefit. If all the "economic benefit" goes to paying off debt, there is no public benefit to speak of. Economic impact analyses that claim to take credit for knock-on spending and investment tend to give too much credit to large projects while ignoring other drivers of growth.
- While a minor point, the bill is specific to a "men's basketball team." While it's obvious this means, "the Blazers," in the attempt to generalize the specific beneficiary of this bill, the State is resorting to a gender bias and effectively promoting economic discrimination against

women's sports. It should not be the business of the State of Oregon to explicitly favor men's activities through economic investment.

Vote no on SB 1501.

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