

# MEMORANDUM

February 13, 2020

TO: HON. FRED GIROD AND HON. PAUL HOVEY, CO-CHAIRS

cc: MEMBERS, JOINT COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION

FROM: WALLY VAN VALKENBURG

RE: Capital Funding for Portland State University Vernier Science Center (HB 5201)

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I am writing to request your support for the appropriation of state funds to renovate the undergraduate science building at Portland State University.

Although I am not a graduate of PSU, I am a passionate advocate for the University. As Chair of the Oregon Economic Development Commission from 2003-2013, I came to understand and appreciate the critical role PSU plays in creating economic prosperity for all Oregonians, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds. Because of this, I joined the PSU Foundation Board of Trustees in 2013, where I have worked to help develop private philanthropic support for the University. In the fall of last year, Governor Brown appointed me to the PSU Board of Trustees, which has given me additional insight into the challenges we face in seeking to provide a first class educational opportunity for all of our students.

Portland State University plays a unique role in Oregon's higher education ecosystem. As Oregon's most diverse public university, PSU provides access to underrepresented communities while also maintaining top rated education and research programs. PSU's request to fund the Vernier Science Center provides your committee with an opportunity to invest in both economic prosperity and equity for Oregonians. As I'm sure you are aware, demand for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) talent is high, and our ability to generate that talent is key to our ability to attract and retain high quality jobs. At PSU, more than half of our STEM enrollment consists of first-generation, low-income students from historically underrepresented groups. These students need and deserve a facility and programs that will prepare them for tomorrow's workforce.

For all of these reasons, I hope you will act favorably on PSU's funding request. Thanks to both of you and to your fellow committee members for your service to our State.