



**Board of Directors**

April 14, 2021

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Tya Ping  
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Heidi Edwards  
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Wendy Kroger  
Director

Felicita Monteblanco  
Director

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Doug Menke

Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield; Vice Co-Chairs Girod, Gomberg, and Smith; and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District (THPRD), we would like to thank you and your colleagues for your efforts to protect and assist Oregonians in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are especially thankful for the financial support that was provided to special districts from the first round of federal COVID-19 relief funds. The allocation received by THPRD from Washington County via the CARES Act helped the district address critical needs in our community, including the delivery of mobile recreation services, emergency childcare, safe community events, and access to sports fields.

Like special districts across Oregon, THPRD has been placed in a precarious financial position. During the first closure order, the district had to lay off more than 84% of our workforce since a significant portion of our annual budget relies on fees collected from programs and classes. The district has incurred over \$5 million in pandemic-related expenses and we lost over \$5 million in program revenues that normally fund operation of the district, in the prior fiscal year ended June 30, 2020 alone. We are projecting additional revenue losses of between \$11 million and \$14 million for the current fiscal year. As we work to reopen and begin to rebuild from the impact of the closures, THPRD is also grappling with an increase in our unemployment insurance rate with projected costs of \$750,000 in the upcoming fiscal year, as compared to \$50,000 in the previous year. This significant increase in cost will impact our ability to reopen.

THPRD is grateful that Congress passed the American Recovery Plan Act, approving \$2.6 billion for the State of Oregon and \$1.5 billion for Oregon's cities and counties, but unfortunately special districts – a large sector of Oregon's local governments – have the potential to be overlooked during the distribution of these funds. This year, Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO), in partnership with the National Special Districts Coalition (NSDC), supported federal legislation which would have required states to allocate 5% of their relief funds to assist special districts. This bill had the support of Senator Wyden and Congressman DeFazio. While it did not pass, **we urge the Joint Ways & Means Committee to consider a \$130 million allocation (5%) from the State's American Recovery Plan Act funding for special districts in Oregon.**

As indicated in polling conducted by SDAO, the estimated fiscal impact to Oregon's special districts is \$562.3 million. We recognize that this is not a reasonable amount to expect for special districts considering the State's other needs, but we do believe that the 5% allocation is fair and reasonable, especially considering that cities and counties are receiving a direct allocation of approximately \$1.5 billion. Congress provided a flexibility in relation to this issue in the American Rescue Plan Act, empowering states with the authority to transfer Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery monies specifically to special districts. We urge you to support this new transfer authority as intended to distribute a portion of the State Fiscal Recovery funding to Oregon's special districts.

For THPRD, there are a variety of different areas in which the district would look to direct potential federal funding. In addition to those services we have continued to provide as best we can – emergency childcare, mobile recreation services, access to facilities, etc. – the district has also identified a need for additional infrastructure across our 50 square miles of territory, specifically public restrooms. During the COVID-19 pandemic it has become very apparent that hand washing is a critical way to prevent the spread of the virus, however, many public places have closed as a result of the pandemic, creating a lack of hygienic facilities. To address this need, THPRD looks to build three permanent public restrooms in key locations across the district. It will cost approximately \$1.5 million to build these restrooms, including permitting and construction costs and tapping into sewer and water utilities. We hope you agree that having access to public restrooms is critical infrastructure as we know that it will improve the health and safety of our community members by creating more access to hygienic facilities. The legislature is in the position to fund this infrastructure that will positively impact health for years to come.

The pandemic has truly underscored the essential role of local parks and recreation. THPRD swiftly mobilized to keep parks, trails and green spaces open to support physical and mental health, especially for those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. However, the closure of THPRD facilities along with the associated economic losses devastated our ability to serve the public. And the district's Access for All work, engaging marginalized communities and ensuring their access to vital services is even more critical now as these communities are disproportionately impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

As you develop your priorities for the State's American Recovery Plan Act funding, we ask that you:

- **Consider the request for a \$130 million allocation for Oregon's special districts.**
- **Consider THPRD's specific need for additional hygienic facilities to support the health and safety of our community.**
- **Consider ways the State could help mitigate the impacts to unemployment insurance rates, including HB 3389 and potential funding allocations.**

THPRD is ready and excited to work with you as we continue to protect Oregonians and facilitate our state's recovery.

Sincerely,

*The THPRD Board of Directors*



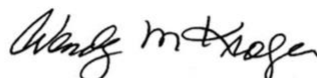
Ashley Hartmeier-Prigg  
THPRD Board President



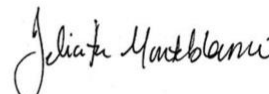
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