

To: Joint Ways and Means Committee

From: Patrick Lee, Superintendent of the Rogue River School District

RE: Rogue River Wellness Center

Date: April 16, 2021

I want to express my support for budgetary funding to be allocated towards the Rogue River Wellness Center.

I graduated from the Rogue River School District in 1989. In 2019 I returned to the Rogue River School District as the Superintendent of Schools.

Although our community has grown since I graduated in 1989, we continue to be lacking in the area of health and wellbeing. I am concerned about this void and the impact it is having on community members, both young and old. I am also greatly concerned about the lack of early education opportunities our families have within the Rogue River School District.

Rogue River is designated as medically underserved and as a health professional shortage area. In addition, Rogue River School District is the ONLY district in Jackson County without a health clinic. Equally disturbing is our community having the highest mortality ratio in southern Oregon at 1.73, with the state mean being 1.23. Over 70% of the residents have unmet primary care needs.

We currently have one child friendly, secular, supervised after school program or place for students to socialize in healthy environments. In fact, there is only one infant care facility serving 0-3 year olds located in the Wimer/Rogue River community. To add to this, Rogue River currently has 21% of its families living below poverty; 34% utilizing food stamps with 72% receiving free & reduced lunches at the elementary school; 52% of our community population is living on Social Security, and an alarming 17% of our community minors are uninsured. These statistics bring to light the need for a health and wellbeing center in Rogue River that would serve medical needs as well as early education needs.

I ask that you support our community as we endeavor to build a health and wellbeing center which will serve both the Wimer and Rogue River communities. In order to make this much needed facility a reality, we are asking for the full amount necessary (\$3 Million) for the capitol construction of the building.

This center would be three fold, with each space meeting particular needs. One of the spaces would host a 0-3 yr. Nurturing and Learning Space. This area would serve eight toddlers and eight infants. The primary focus would be to provide healthy, nurturing care and learning opportunities for low-income parents and parents able to pay for quality childcare. The second area would be a shared space for Community. Because of the open floor plan, this could be used as a multi-purpose room with opportunities for community gatherings, business meetings, and after school activities. The final space would serve as a Primary Care facility partnering with La Clinica. La Clinica is a leading provider in serving those that are most in need of healthcare. The clinic would not only serve Rogue River School District students and families, but would have the capacity to serve the community.

This investment would pay for itself many times over as it serves community members and fills a void much needed based on the statistics of our community. I believe that in supporting this, you will impact the lives of countless people.

Sincerely,

Patrick Lee
Superintendent
Rogue River School District

