

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Honorable Committee Members,

I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 5555. The funding is vital to the Depoe Bay Harbor and the City of Depoe Bay. Although it was a couple of years before my birth I have been told of the financial crisis that occurred in Depoe Bay when the Army Corp of Engineers closed the port/harbor for the year of 1950. The closure was for the Corp project of creating and the initial dredging of the harbor and construction of the seawall and channel breakwater structures in order to establish a US Coast Guard station and Port of Refuge. Depoe Bay is the only port between Newport (Yaquina Bay) and Garibaldi (Tillamook Bay) and is critical for safety. The project was also vital in that it vastly improved the harbor infrastructure, increasing the available boat moorage and access to and from the ocean. However during the course of the project the financial impact of having the harbor closed was devastating to the community as a whole. Tourist traffic ceased and all local businesses struggled and many failed altogether. I relate this to reinforce the importance of the harbor and its related infrastructure to the community. The Depoe Bay Harbor is the economic engine that drives the City of Depoe Bay. Depoe Bay has been a working harbor since the 1920s and through the past 100 years has made many transitions and adaptations due to changing fisheries and subsequent uses. It continues to be vital and vibrant providing ocean access to sport, commercial and charter fishermen as well as whale watching and sight seeing excursions. Depoe Bay is known as the Worlds Smallest Harbor and the Whale Watching Capital of the World. To continue, the infrastructure in the harbor (docks and pilings) are sorely in need of repair and replacement. Three of five docks are over sixty years old and the pilings are nearly as old. They have survived not only the ravages of time but the impacts of two tsunamis, but that time has taken its toll and the useful lifetime has been reached and even exceeded. Depoe Bay is unique in more than one way. It is one of two incorporated cities in the state without a property tax base, it is also one of two cities that maintain a municipal harbor rather than the harbor having support of a port district. Consequently the city supports itself and the harbor with transient room taxes and grants. Any financial support the city/harbor can get will help prepare it for the next 100 years of service to the community. The United States Coast Guard continues to maintain station Depoe Bay with two 47 foot motor life boats for search and rescue operations.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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