

Dear Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, and Rayfield, and members of the Committee:

My name is Merrick Gruber Kriz. I have lived in Oregon most of my life and grew up, raised my family, and live in Toledo.

I am writing in support of funding for the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center. I can think of few things that have served through the arc of my life as well as our wonderful Toledo Pool. As a youngster, I learned to swim in it, as have my children, grandchildren, and many hundreds of other kids. That alone is value enough for me, but I've also splashed through parties, struggled through life saving classes (which skills I put to use twice in my adult years, successfully), and spent busy happy years on the swim teams. In the many years since then, I've had the joy of cheering on younger generations doing these same activities. And again, while working 20 years in special education, used the Toledo Pool to the benefit of students from around Lincoln County to build water safety skills and pride. In addition, I've gratefully used the pool showers when summer heat would dry our water well. And now, as a senior, I am returning to the pool for a solid but gentle-on-the-joints workout for exercise and good health. All the while, I've mingled and shared the pool with others of different generations, needs, and locales using the pool to their advantage too. Over the years, it has been an important gathering place to learn, play, and exercise in this beautiful little place we call home. As it turns out, while the pool builds swimmers, it also builds community... and there is no more important infrastructure than that. I have a deep appreciation for the forward-thinking Toledo folks who gathered donations to build the pool originally and to the citizens of Toledo who supported it with city taxes for more than 60 years. We certainly got our money's worth. That sense of value was emphatically underscored in 2017 when the people of our local area voted to create the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District and a tax base that ensures the operation of the pool far into the future. Obviously, I am not alone in appreciation of what our pool provides the folks of this area. It was a remarkable financial commitment to a cause.

Consequently, the pool has never looked better. It is very well-managed, clean, organized, and bright with a professional staff who do a wonderful job in challenging times. There is work to do, but it remains a wonderful place to swim.

It is because we have such a long history of vigorously supporting our pool locally that I am compelled to write to the committee as you consider allocations for investment in communities around Oregon. While local support is strong, the facility needs some repairs and upgrades. Over the years the watery elements inside and out have taken their toll and modern improvements are missing. We all know those kinds of projects go far beyond an operating budget but are the very improvements needed to carry the pool forward to serve well for generations into the future. These improvements will manage energy and water use more efficiently, deepen the pool for safety and allow water activities that we have not been able to consider before, upgrade the dressing rooms to meet ADA requirements and the needs of all swimmers comfortably. There is a vision, much like our earlier Toledo founders, to expand the scope of swimming by adding to the width of the pool which will greatly enhance organizing swim meets and more swimming opportunities for our youth while also accommodating more swimmers on a daily basis. As wonderful as our pool is, we recognize it needs to become even better. I hope you will consider joining the people in east Lincoln County to build water safety and recreation long into the future.

Thank you for your consideration of the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District as you allocate these important dollars for Oregonians. Come swim with us!