

April 23, 2021

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

I am writing in support of the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District's request for funding of the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center. Thank you for this opportunity to be heard.

Swimming pools are expensive to build, operate and maintain. In 2017, the citizens in the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District voted to tax themselves through a \$0.77/thousand property tax levy to permanently operate and maintain the pool. However, major renovations to the building and pool tank are needed. Hence, it is important that outside funding be sought for the capital improvements.

The benefits of a swimming pool to the community are immense, long lasting and touch every age group, from senior exercise programs to Mom and Tots swim lessons. East Lincoln County communities value the pool programs, have demonstrated their support, and are adamantly seeking funding assistance to make the pool safer, more durable and appealing, and to improve its water and energy efficiency.

The Toledo swimming pool was initially constructed 73 years ago as an outside pool. In 1960 the pool was enclosed and became a year round asset to the community. If the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center project is funded, the legislature will help provide current and many future generations of Lincoln County residents with a hub for community and fitness activity. I cannot stress enough the physical and mental health benefits the Toledo Pool provides. The funding request will allow the pool to update its ADA compliance, provide a community multipurpose room for meeting and other events, expand the pool itself and have space for a fitness center.

The Toledo pool is old but the Greater Toledo Pool and Recreation District personnel do a fantastic job maintaining the pool and keeping patrons safe in the era of Covid. The pool currently has several activity sessions. It allows time for lap swimmers of all skill levels time to exercise. This group is passionate and dedicated to these efforts. There is an adult water exercise and fitness program and youth swim team open to all young people looking to improve their swimming skills and train for specific goals. As the Covid restrictions ease, the pool can open recreational pool time and swimming lessons can return.

Our rural communities in east Lincoln County do not receive tourism dollars, nor do we have the political pull of other more populated regions in the State. We are a fishing, timber, and agricultural area with low and moderate income families. This project cannot succeed without state funding assistance. Please include funding for the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center in your Committee budget recommendations. This funding this will provide long term benefits to the Greater Toledo area. Fifty years from now the community will still be thanking you for your vision and wisdom.

Best regards,

Braulio Escobar