



INDEPENDENCE

Oregon's Story Begins Here

CITY OF INDEPENDENCE

April 23, 2021

To the Joint Committee On Ways and Means (electronically submitted)

Public Testimony

The City of Independence is appreciative of the efforts from the State of Oregon to make the CARES Act monies available to businesses and residents to manage through the Coronavirus and looks forward to the opportunities that the American Rescue Plan monies provide.

The City of Independence believes that **recovery, resiliency and long-term stability** should be the driving goals of the American Rescue Plan monies and we plan to be as **creative and flexible** as possible to distribute the local monies to residents and businesses who demonstrate they were directly impacted by COVID-19. We hope to partner with the State of Oregon to leverage our local monies as much as possible to assist those in need.

As the Joint Committee makes choices about how to distribute American Rescue Plan monies, we encourage **flexibility, creativity, and partnership** as the themes that drive your decisions to help those in need.

Independence businesses will struggle to survive through another summer of low tourism and reduce/cancelled events. Many of our businesses rely on the summer months to survive through the winter months and it is increasingly obvious that although progress has been made, they will not have the traffic flow that they need to survive without continued assistance. Independence has been creative with cash scratch-it giveaways and technical assistance support in addition to grant programs to help our businesses survive the last year, but we will need much more to help them survive the next year and help lead to recovery. **Grants** that get directly to those impacted **based on their need** for assistance is key for the next year. *Please trust us to do what works for our communities, Please, limit the number of strings and limitations... our city is happy to be held accountable and show who, where and how we spend the funds.* **Grants** that are directed towards **Technical Assistance programs are EXCELLENT tools** that lead to financial and business resiliency as well as long-term recovery. **Support of tourism activities** and programs will also be essential to long-term recoveries for Independence businesses.

As the Joint Committee considers infrastructure, the City believes that monies should go to projects that are **forward leaning and look towards resiliency, sustainability** and resolving problems facing the State including **climate change** and the shortage of housing supply at all levels. For example, in Independence we have the need for *a bridge that is the key to opening up a whole area withing urban grown boundary for new housing.* At the local level **smart investments in sewer, water and transportation lower utility rates** provide a long-lasting impact and allow residents to use those monies to thrive and expand the local

economy. We look forward to partnerships that accomplish these goals especially in sewer, water, broadband and transportation/transit projects that expand capacity and resolve operational issues.

The City engaged over 2,000 people in our recent 2040 Vision process. They told us to support programs that **leverage broadband technologies to provide services including virtual health and mental health**. Investment is necessary to engage and serve diverse populations in rural communities that are not otherwise served, especially our senior and Latinx residents. Transportation is commonly the largest barrier to accessing services. **Transit and delivering services directly in the community is the answer**. To accomplish this, universal broadband connectivity and investments in hybrid facilities that provide local testing and clinical support with virtual appointments for professional decision making are essential. Investments in local transit options are also critical. Investment in communities that have already established broadband connectivity will provide a model for healthy communities regardless of physical access to important services, will move rural communities forward rapidly and resolve many of the access problems that impact aging and minority populations.

Independence looks forward to the next few years with anticipation of being able to resolve many long-standing issues our residents face and we believe with flexible, creative investments from State and local resources this is achievable. It will not be easy, and it will be a tremendous amount of work but through partnership and hard work it is accomplishable and is worth the time and effort. We hope that your decisions will provide financial assistance to drive forward a recovery in Oregon that other States will envy.



John McArdle
Mayor