



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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RE: Testimony on SB 5534

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon state parks system was created nearly one hundred years ago with the first land donation from Sarah Helmick in 1922. The system started out as more of a natural, scenic, cultural and outdoor recreation division within ODOT. The campgrounds were primarily developed in the 50's for the 50's and no longer meet the needs of today's recreation demands and diverse communities. The system provides over 51 million visits a year and parks are located in some of the most facility-damaging environments, especially along the coast. Because of these factors, many systems and buildings are constantly on the verge of failing.

Whether that is 50-plus year-old water, sewer and electrical system, restroom and shower facilities, or the fifty 100-year old buildings in our care, the system is aging and needs repairs, preservation and upgrades to meet the current and future demand for outdoor recreation. For example, Silver Falls has over 20 historically significant roofs and 50+ year old septic and sewer systems at Smith Creek and the Y-camp that need to be replaced. Many of our campgrounds, like Fort Stevens, need septic, sewer and electrical upgrades. Systemwide, more than \$17 million worth of our restroom facilities will fail within the next five years without significant repairs or replacement. Our team does an incredible job at cobbling these old and failing systems functioning, but many have exceeded their lifecycle and are vulnerable to failure which will be costly and potentially impossible for us to respond to. When Oregonians voted in 1999 and 2010 to dedicate Lottery funds to support state and local park systems, they slowed the rate of decay. But that money is spread thin, and comes in a little at a time. Between annual wear and tear and the increasing cost to operate an aging system, it barely keeps up.

OPRD is dedicated to providing a welcoming atmosphere for visitors as well as better access to our properties. The demand for camping has been rapidly increasing with population growth. We recognize the need for more access, and know we offer very few camping opportunities close to where most people live, primarily in the Willamette Valley from Portland to Eugene. To help keep pace, this financial infusion would allow us to consider the addition of tent camping opportunities at our current locations such as Elijah Bristow, Willamette Mission, Champoeg and others. Based on cost estimates from past development, a 30-site campground with associated amenities the cost per campground is approximately \$1.5M. We are proposing to develop at least 7 of these – mostly in the Valley, but also along the coast and at least 2 in Eastern Oregon.

As you can see, a \$100 million-dollar investment would breathe a lot of much needed life into the aging, but incredibly special Oregon state park system. We would be able to complete about four years' worth of major maintenance, replacement and upgrade projects, along with some expansion to continue to offer the experience that Oregonians have grown to appreciate and expect over the last century. This would be a remarkable gift to the people of Oregon that have loved and supported their system for the last 100 years and the ability for it to be better prepared to enter into its second century of serving Oregonians recreational needs for generations to come.

Our dedicated lottery funds will go on to achieve great things over the long haul as we continue to modernize the system, and pairing it with a strong, immediate shot in the arm will deliver a strong park system to this generation, as well as the next.