
February 25, 2021

Senate Housing and Development Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee,

Every year, there is a 10 percent chance of a major flood along the lower Columbia River in Multnomah County, and the risk only grows as climate change and rising sea levels continue to impact river conditions.

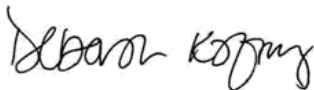
For the last century, a 27-mile levee system on Oregon's banks of the Columbia River has reduced this risk of flooding. Constructed when the area was primarily farmland, the levees now protect a major transportation hub and economic corridor for the county, region, and state.

The levees guard an estimated 59,000 jobs and critical infrastructure like the Portland International Airport and the Troutdale Reynolds Industrial Park. They also protect over 7,500 residents, including 1,400 county and state inmates, as well as many residents of alternative shelter communities in Northeast Portland.

This vulnerability to our residents and businesses is what has driven our participation in the Levee Ready Columbia partnership for the last seven years. Ongoing protection of this region of Multnomah County is both an economic and moral imperative and it is why we continue to support the development of an alternative governance structure to administer the local levee system.

We appreciate the legislature's past support for our efforts and for other communities facing similar challenges with aging levee infrastructure. We urge you to continue this support with the passage of Senate Bill 622, which will make critical grant funding available for communities across Oregon.

Sincerely,



Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair



Lori Stegmann
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 4
Levee Ready Columbia Board member