



February 22, 2019

To: Chair Jama and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Ivo Trummer, State Affairs Manager, Port of Portland

Re: Port of Portland Supports SB 622

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee,

Levees were built throughout the 20th century to help reduce the risk of flooding on lands adjacent to oceans, rivers, and streams. In Oregon, there are well over one thousand miles of levees spread out across the state. These levees were built in urban and rural areas alike, from Burns to Klamath Falls, Pendleton to Portland, Coos Bay to Warrenton, and everywhere in between. Unfortunately, in most of these communities, local jurisdictions struggle to keep up with the necessary maintenance, let alone completing the work required to bring the levees up to modern day standards and comply with changing federal safety standards for levees.

At the Port of Portland, we recognize the importance of sufficient state and local funding for levee maintenance and repair. Much of the Port of Portland infrastructure is located behind the 27-mile levee system that runs along the Columbia River in the Portland metro area protecting the Portland International Airport as well as essential infrastructure such as drinking water for nearly one million Oregonians, multiple railroads and interstate highways, and distribution centers that help to move goods in, out, and around our state.

In 2015, the Oregon State Legislature recognized the importance of levee infrastructure by creating a levee-specific loan fund under the Special Public Works Fund (SPWF) located within the Oregon Business Development Department. This loan fund was immensely helpful to the jurisdictions that were able to finance a loan, but many were unable to take advantage of the funding because they could not afford to pay back a loan over time, even at modest interest rates. To help solve this problem the State Legislature in 2019 created the Levee Grant Program and allocated \$15 million in lottery bond sales to the fund (HB 5030). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State was unable to issue any lottery bonds in 2020 so no funding has been made available through this program – but the need for many communities for this type of funding has not gone away.

Senate Bill 622 allocates \$10 million in lottery bonds to the Levee Grant Fund to support the planning and execution of important levee improvement projects along with levee investigations to identify their adequacy for federal certification and accreditation. With grant dollars available for flood safety projects, more communities will be able to get to work planning and constructing these critical public safety projects. This will reduce the risk of flooding across Oregon and provide important protection to people, property, businesses, and jobs, as well as parks, watersheds, and native fish and wildlife around our state.

Thank you for your consideration and support for SB 622.