



Feb. 11, 2022

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Ref.: SB 5702

Dear Co-Chairs Sen. Girod and Rep. Holvey:

We write in support of SB 5702 capital request allocation on behalf of the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance (ATEA) in Hood River County.

This request will enable the resumption of agricultural production on currently underused farmland while also serving as a “learning lab” for students enrolled in an agricultural program of study. This farmland is recognized for high-value production and thus will be an ideal site for students to apply their skills in mastering the business of agriculture. This farmland is currently owned by a public agency, the mission of which does not align with agricultural production and education. Project sponsors propose to return the farm to active production in conjunction with a dual-credit educational program of study.

The site will serve to test new agricultural technologies, which will be essential as farmers seek to maximize efficiency amid times of climate change, workforce disruption and global competition. Success will help ensure the continuation of family farming in Hood River County and the Mid-Columbia region by equipping new generations with the knowledge, skills and hands-on learning to succeed in the business of farming.

Capital investment through SB 5702, as supported by Sen. Thomsen, will be instrumental to this project by allowing acquisition of the parcel by the Agriculture-Technology-Education Alliance. This project is recognized among the top 10 priorities for 2022 by the Hood River County Economic Development Working Group.

ATEA will be an economic ecosystem centered on an “innovation farm” and program of study at Hood River Valley High School and Columbia Gorge Community College. Agricultural and technology sectors will partner with entrepreneurs to help agricultural producers remain competitive.

ATEA embraces these elements:

- Program of agricultural study: A dual credit high school program leading to degree or certificate at Columbia Gorge Community College with ability to transfer to four-year institutions for

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Rich Polkinghorn | Superintendent  
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continuing education. College courses also provide opportunity for the incumbent workforce to gain new skills needed for advancement in agricultural careers.

- Innovation farm: An active, commercial farm that will expand the region's capacity to produce locally-sourced fruits, vegetables and specialty crops while providing students with opportunity to apply their knowledge in a working farm. Current and emerging agricultural technologies will be integrated into the production model, both to enhance year-round agricultural production and also to test new technologies in a real-world setting.

We encourage your support of SB 5702 and our capital funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rich Polkinghorn", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Rich Polkinghorn  
Superintendent of Schools, Hood River County School District