



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 30, 2023

To: **Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Morgan and Nguyen and Members of the Committee**
House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

Re: **HB 3349 with Proposed Amendment to Spend \$2.4 million without Accountability –**
OPPOSE

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has positions on good governance and on fiscal accountability. The original bill focused on expansion of the Regional Solutions program for which the League has been engaged for a number of years. We were a part of the Steering Committee created by HB 2630 (2013) and worked with others in 2014 to pass HB 4015, officially creating the Regional Solutions program.

We were not in favor of the original HB 3349 because of its many layers of Councils and Committees and we believe we have in Business Oregon an Infrastructure Finance Authority and other funds in that agency, as well as funds in DEQ, OHA's Drinking Water Division and other agencies. We had hoped that the focus of assuring Oregon has the staffing needed to access the multiple federally funded programs would be the amendment. The proposed amendment instead appropriates \$300,000 to eight different entities without clarity around the way this money would be spent—staffing, contracts, or other uses. Unlike when the state provides money to agencies, there is no clear criteria on how the money would be spent nor implementation rulemaking that usually accompanies these allocations.

For instance, how would \$300,000 be used for all 241 cities or 36 counties? For some of the other entities, to whom are they accountable? We have no doubt that assistance is needed for first researching which funds are available, writing grant applications and then, very importantly, implementing the grants under strict federal criteria.

The League had recommended to the new Governor as she considered her budget that additional staffing be housed in her office to assure dissemination of information and assistance with accessing these grant opportunities. There we would see specific accountability and oversight by the legislature. We understand that she does have some staff in her office to do just that. And we know that some natural resource agencies are monitoring funding opportunities as well—although they could use additional staff for this purpose. \$2.4 million would buy a number of agency staff.

We do not want to leave federal monies on the table if that money benefits Oregonians. We expect a cost/benefit analysis for every grant being considered. But we don't believe that this bill with proposed amendments gets us there.

We appreciate the sponsors for working to address a very real issue but are hopeful that we can find a way in the Ways and Means process to truly get us where we want to go. Without further amendments, we regretfully ask that you OPPOSE this bill with proposed amendments.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Rebecca Gladstone
President LWVOR



Peggy Lynch
Natural Resources Coordinator