

Submitter: Veronica Williams

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital
Construction

Measure: HB5201

Thank you for for this opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB 5201. I would like to share with you my thoughts on the potential loss of the Hillsboro Hops Single A Baseball Team and why it is about more than a baseball game.

For many people this issue is simply about the numbers – specifically the dollars being requested by the City of Hillsboro. I'll mention some at the end, but I really want to talk about community.

Ten years ago the LLC that owns the Hops moved the team from Yakima, WA to Hillsboro. The managing owners, Mike & Laura McMurray, were looking to bring minor league baseball to a community that would support the team and where they and the team could support the community.

Originally a “short season Single A team”. They played an abbreviated season from June to September. Players and some managers lived with local families. The owners studied organizations well known for their warm and personal customer service. They put out the word and hired wonderful, local, seasonal staff as ushers and for other day to day ballpark operations. All people who like people – and they created a family atmosphere at the ballpark. If you are a regular – everyone knows your name. If you are a first-time visitor, they work to make sure you have a wonderful experience.

But the Hops ownership and staff were not just interested in the ballpark experience – they were interested in becoming active members of the larger Washington County Community.

- They established the Hops Fund as part of the larger Hillsboro Community Foundation. Over 10 years they have donated almost \$700,000 in grants; first generation scholarships; Little League and School field renovations, maintenance, uniforms and equipment.
- The Fund contributed to the American Red Cross for Oregon Wild Fire Relief; supported coaching clinics to teach volunteer coaches “Positive Coaching” skills; contributed to THPRD's “Access for All” program serving underprivileged communities and people with disabilities; supported High School graduation events.
- They built a strong relationship with Centro Cultural and established the Sonadores (Dreamers) as part of Minor League Baseball's efforts to reach out to our Latino communities.
- They work with their major sponsors, such as Intel, on promotions that raise funds for community organizations. Through their “Strike outs for Stem”, this past year Intel contributed \$50,000 to the Hillsboro Schools Foundation.
- They hold both baseball and softball clinics, supported by their coaches and players.

- Their mascot Barley routinely appears at community events and parades and promotes literacy in conjunction with local libraries and schools.

Baseball appeals to all ages, all abilities and all demographics. Over 10 years the Hops have ensured that affordable tickets are available and encouraged families to attend with special themed events of interest to all.

And now the \$'s.

The Hops are required by major league baseball to provide a certain level of facilities. Minor league baseball exists as a training and development league and the employees (baseball players under contract) are entitled to proper & safe facilities. The current ballpark does not meet these requirements. When they spent \$1 million to review the current facilities and develop a remodeling plan – it turned out that to remodel the existing facilities would cost a minimum of \$160M. A brand-new ballpark would cost \$120M.

Of that, close to 70% will be private funds. The Washington County Commission last week unanimously approved \$8 million in lodging tax for the new ballpark. The request to the State is for \$15M to be given to the City of Hillsboro to support the construction. The new stadium will be owned by the City, and managed by the Hops. This is about more than a baseball game, about more than a new ball field. It is about our community here in Washington County.

Please support the request in HB 5201