

February 27, 2024

House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Tran and Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

Although they are largely invisible to the naked eye, 27-miles of levees and other associated flood safety infrastructure along the Columbia River in northern Multnomah County play a critical role in Oregon's economy and protect the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Oregonians. For this reason, the City of Portland respectfully asks you to please vote in support of SB 1517.

SB 1517 makes important updates to ORS Chapter 550, which the legislature passed in 2019 to create a new special district in northern Multnomah County that is slated to take over the operations, maintenance and improvement of century old flood safety infrastructure that currently protects over \$5.5 billion in property and supports over \$16 billion in annual economic activity.

Unfortunately, since ORS 550 was enacted, it has become clear that the original revenue model that was being considered for this new special district cannot be realistically implemented. As such, a coalition of public, private, and nonprofit partners have identified an alternative approach to support this district. SB 1517 puts those tools in place. We understand that the City of Portland will be asked to pay a new flood safety benefit fee to support the operation of the urban flood safety and water quality district. This fee is considerably less than what it will cost the City of Portland and her residents if the district is unsuccessful in standing itself up and improving the infrastructure to meet new federal safety standards.

For this reason, we strongly urge you to vote yes on SB 1517. This time sensitive legislation must pass in 2024 to ensure the district can unlock more than \$100 million of federal funding to improve the levees and associated infrastructure. We have no time left for delay. Please help us finish this work and put this district in place without delay.

Sincerely,

Michael Jordan  
Chief Administrative Officer  
City of Portland