

Written Testimony by James West in Support of HB 2966

1/30/2025

Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2966.

I want to address one of the main objections frequently cited by opponents of public finance options, which revolves around the study from the Washington State Treasurer's Office that is often referenced to discourage further exploration of these models. To put it bluntly, this study should not be treated as the definitive word on the subject. The report in question, often cited obliquely as a comprehensive review of public finance feasibility, lacks the balance and rigor necessary to inform sound public policy.

The Treasurer responsible for this study, Duane Davidson, served just one term and, following his departure, joined the State Financial Officers Foundation—a group known for its extremely anti-public sector views and ties to lobbying against public financial solutions. His affiliation with such an organization raises serious questions about the impartiality of the conclusions presented. This was not an unbiased investigation of public finance options but a selective review designed to reinforce pre-existing, ideologically driven opposition.

Public finance is a complex issue, and determining the right path forward requires input from a diverse and balanced set of voices—not just those with ties to organizations ideologically opposed to public institutions. That is precisely why HB 2966 is so important. The bill would establish a task force that brings together a wide array of stakeholders, including financial experts, local government officials, small business representatives, and community advocates, to evaluate public finance options in a thorough manner. This approach will ensure that our state explores every possibility with transparency and integrity.

I urge this committee to support HB 2966 so that Oregon can conduct an honest investigation of public finance options that serve the public good, free from the influence of one-sided reports or biased studies. Thank you for your time and consideration.

James West