

February 11, 2025

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

**Re: House Bill 2693, Continued Support of the Statewide Levee Grant Program**

Chair Tran and Members of the Committee,

Levees were built across the country throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to help protect lands from flooding. In Oregon, there are well over one thousand miles of levees throughout the state. These levees provide critical protection to Oregon's urban and rural areas alike. This infrastructure exists from Vale to Warrenton, Klamath Falls to Portland, Milton-Freewater to Turner, and everywhere in between. Unfortunately, local jurisdictions that operate these systems struggle to keep up with the necessary maintenance and capital investments needed to bring this critical infrastructure up to modern-day federal safety levee standards. As the threat of climate-driven storms, atmospheric rivers, and rain-on-snow events increases, the need to invest in our state's levee infrastructure becomes more vital.

In 2019, the State Legislature created the Levee Grant Program and allocated \$15 million in lottery bond sales to the fund (HB 5030). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this bond sale did not move forward. In the 2021 session, the Legislature again allocated \$15M in lottery bond sales to the fund. Business Oregon completed the rulemaking and has awarded or obligated these funds, supporting levee operators throughout the state. In the 2023 session, the Legislature allocated \$10M in lottery bond sales to continue supporting levee operators throughout the state.

This grant program provides vital funding to communities, allowing them to make critical improvements to their flood safety infrastructure. Business Oregon has commitments for the full \$10 million available through the 2023 allocation. With continued need to adapt to a changing climate that brings stronger and more frequent storms and changes in federal flood safety regulations, the need remains strong for continued investment by the state in the Levee Grant Program.

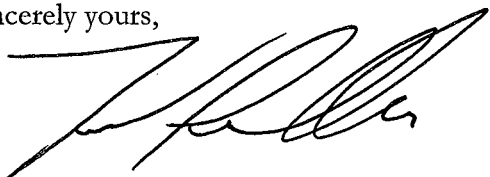
Many communities eagerly await the opportunity to apply for this grant funding. House Bill 2693 of the 2025 Legislative Session allocates \$10 million in net proceeds from lottery bond sales to the Levee Grant Fund to continue supporting the investigation, planning, and construction of flood safety improvement projects.

With continued grant dollars available for flood safety projects, more communities will be able to work on evaluating and improving this important public safety infrastructure. This will reduce the risk of flooding across Oregon, making our communities more resilient while providing important protection to people, property, and businesses, as well as parks, open spaces, and fish and wildlife around the state.

Sadly, there are too many examples of what happens when our levees cannot withstand floodwaters. Many people know about the tragic 1948 flood that washed away the City of Vanport, killing at least 15 people and leaving another 18,000 without homes. In 2020, the Umatilla River overtook a levee in Pendleton, wreaking havoc on the community and damaging over 500 buildings, as well as closing parts of Interstate 84. In 2023, an atmospheric river led to a massive levee failure in California, leading to the flooding of the city of Pajaro. That storm was originally forecast to come across Oregon.

Thank you for your previous support of levee operators and communities across Oregon. **Please direct \$15 million in lottery bond sales to the Levee Grant Program through your support of House Bill 2693.** This is a much-needed resource for critical flood safety infrastructure throughout our state.

Sincerely yours,



Todd Fuller – City Manager