

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager

In Support of House Bill 2726

**House Committee on Emergency Management, General
Government and Veterans**

February 18, 2025



Metro support HB 2726 which provides \$20 million in lottery bond funding this biennia and \$25 million in lottery bond funding in the next biennia for the Columbia River levee system. The funding supports critical flood safety improvements necessary to meet federal flood safety standards.

Metro is the regional government in the Portland metropolitan area. Together with local government and community organizations, we have actively engaged in efforts to address the Columbia River flood safety issues in urban Multnomah County. Historically, we've served on multiple flood district boards including PEN 1 Board, SDIC Board, and the Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District interim board. We've also participated in the Levee Ready Columbia partnership. Collectively, these organizations and partnerships have all focused the past decade on how to meet federal levee requirements and create a strong and functioning system.

These efforts have successfully leveraged local, regional, state and federal policy and funding solutions to upgrade and improve the flood safety system. The solutions have included the consolidation of multiple governing entities into one, reducing redundancy and administrative burdens. It's included an identified capital package that meets federal safety standards conducted by the US Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA. This capital package will likely unlock more than \$100 million in federal funding. Additionally, the local community stepped up with the 2024 passage of \$150 million property tax bond to support these crucial improvements.

To see this critical project across the finish line, state funding assistance is also needed. Fixing and maintaining the levee system will protect significant assets that serve not just our region but the entire state. The levees protect the Portland International Airport, the Oregon Air National Guard, Oregon's second largest water supply source and 48,000 jobs producing \$16 billion of economic activity. In addition, there are 7,400 residents living behind the levees, including many vulnerable populations, as well as important wildlife habitat in need of restoration. All of this requires a functioning and strong levee system, and state investment is crucial to help make these necessary repairs.

HB 2726 provides a crucial funding to support the Columbia River levee system and provide vital flood protection to our region and our state. Metro urges the Oregon Legislature to pass HB 2726 and provide \$45 million in funding for the levee system.