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Statement of Support:

HB 2269

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

Submitted by: The Honorable Gary Wilhelms

March 18, 2025

The Oregon State Capitol Foundation was founded by statute in 1997 under the auspices of Legislative Administration and became a stand-alone 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2015, again by statute. Although the Foundation is now a standalone nonprofit, legislators continue to be appointed to the Board in order to serve as liaisons between the Board and the Legislature, particularly because Oregon is one of a small number of states in which the Legislature owns the Capitol building.

The Foundation funds a number of programs including civics education, oral histories of some of Oregon's most noted leaders, exhibits within the Capitol as well as the Capitol grounds, and many other programs. For example, our civics education program has sponsored \$270,000 in awards to 19 Oregon based organizations since 2022, including the Oregon Kid Governor Program, YMCA Youth and Government, and Civics Learning Project. And, once the Capitol opens this Fall, visitors will once again be able to experience the Visitor Services Center, sponsored entirely by the Foundation.

Following the establishment of the Foundation as a non-profit, several practices and policies were changed. For example, there no longer exists a separate operating account within the State Treasury. Because the Foundation is no longer under Legislative Administration, operating funds are currently held in a non-profit business checking account and are federally insured. Therefore, we ask that ORS 173.505 and ORS 173.515 be repealed.

HB 2269 also changes the number of legislative Board members from three members from each Chamber to "no more than three" from each Chamber. While legislative members serve a crucial role on the Board, their legislative duties and responsibilities may prevent them from attending Foundation Board meetings, impacting the ability to attain a quorum. Section 1 addresses this issue. It also allows the Board to appoint its own non-legislative members. Currently, new Board

appointments must be vetted and approved by the Legislative Administration Committee. In recent years, when the Legislative Administration Committee has not scheduled a meeting, new appointees have waited over a year to become voting members of the Board.

The bill makes additional changes including the requirement to conduct an audit on a biennial basis rather than annually. The cost of a professional audit has been running approximately \$18,000 per year; money that could be better spent on some of the programs mentioned earlier, such as civics education.

The remainder of the bill primarily recognizes the autonomy of the Foundation, deleting requirements for Legislative Administration to provide meeting space, or requiring consultation with Legislative Administration committees before carrying out statutory directives (although we often do).

Our Board members welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss any of the Foundation's exciting programs which are designed to enhance the visitor experience to our illustrious State Capitol. Each of our staff and Board members are dedicated to preserving the history of this beautiful Building and educating Oregon's citizens about the legislative process.

To that end, we appreciate your favorable consideration and ultimate passage of HB 2269.