

March 28, 2025
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Request for \$6 million match for Columbia Memorial Hospital's FEMA BRIC grant.

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

My name is Michael Lewis. I'm a physician specializing in pulmonary disease and Critical Care Medicine.

It's my understanding that a BRIC grant requires a local match to leverage federal funding to accomplish resiliency of our local healthcare infrastructure and I am speaking today to support that local funding match.

My medical practice career was initially in Portland at several downtown tertiary care hospitals. During much of that time, because of the lack of coastal access to my medical specialty, I would commute monthly to hold a Pulmonary clinic in Astoria. In 2013, I left my Portland practice, moved to Astoria, and established a hospital-based Pulmonary clinic at Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH). This helped to alleviate the need for patients to travel to Portland for this specialty care and facilitated transition to a higher level of care available in the Portland metro area.

I can tell you that our local citizens much prefer to receive their care locally rather than having to travel over the Coast Range, in frequently inclement weather, followed by having to navigate Portland area traffic while trying to figure out in which direction to drive.

Our patients are very appreciative of the fact that over the past fifteen years, more and more primary and specialty care has become available locally and our hospital administration has developed a relationship with the Oregon Health and Science University such that, for example, we have a full-service Cancer Center and an Emergency Department staffed by residency trained, Board certified Emergency Medicine clinicians.

Under usual circumstances, local patients receive their care here until such time as it is necessary to arrange for a higher level of care in the Portland metro area. What we found out during the Covid Pandemic is that we cannot always count on our Portland area colleagues to be able to easily accommodate a transfer of care; sometimes there's just "no room at the Inn" or the staffing is just not available.

Now think about what might happen in the event of a geologic catastrophe such as the forecast earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The amount of devastation would not stop somewhere in the middle of the Coast Range. The Portland metro area is forecast to experience damage involving building structures as well as bridges crossing the Willamette and Columbia rivers. This could severely hamper our Portland healthcare colleagues' ability to back up our healthcare delivery needs. We are likely to be on our own. Columbia Memorial Hospital will serve as a healthcare lifeboat for the region, but no matter how willing our staff is to come to the rescue, damage to our healthcare infrastructure is likely to hinder our ability to serve our community. Thus, the need for preemptive attention to the resiliency of our local healthcare infrastructure. It is through state matching of funds via HB 5006 that we can obtain Bric grants which will allow us to make our best efforts at healthcare delivery in the event of an unprecedented disaster.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your consideration.

Michael Lewis, MD