

Submitter: Whit Bender
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB110

Greetings Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue,

My name is Whit Bender, and I'm a resident of Eastern Oregon. I come before you today not just as a fan of baseball, but as a father and a proud supporter of the game. As someone who has spent countless hours at ballparks, coaching my 13-year-old son in both recreational and travel baseball, I can tell you firsthand how important this game is to our communities and to families like mine.

My son has been playing baseball since he was 4 years old. He started out in a small-town league, just like so many other kids in rural parts of Oregon. Over the years, his love for the game has grown, and he's moved on to travel baseball, representing Eastern Oregon with pride. His dedication, teamwork, and the lessons he's learned on the field have shaped him not just as an athlete, but as a young person.

Baseball has taught him discipline, resilience, and how to deal with both success and failure. It has provided him with opportunities to bond with teammates and coaches, as well as made memories that will last a lifetime. However, there are still challenges for families like ours who live outside major metropolitan areas. Access to higher-level competition, coaching, and facilities can sometimes feel out of reach.

This is why I strongly believe that bringing Major League Baseball to Portland would be a game-changer—not just for Portland, but for the entire state of Oregon, including rural areas like mine. Portland is a city that is growing in both population and culture. It is a city rich with passionate sports fans, and it has the infrastructure to support an MLB team. But beyond the economic and logistical benefits, bringing MLB to Portland would have a profound impact on youth baseball programs across the state.

If we had an MLB team in Portland, it would provide young players like my son the chance to aspire to something greater. It would give them role models to look up to, and it would bring the sport closer to their hearts. Imagine how much it would mean to kids in small towns, like my son, to be able to watch a professional baseball game in person, to learn from players who were once just like them—kids with big dreams

and a love for the game.

Having an MLB team in Portland could also inspire more kids to pick up a bat and glove, encouraging the next generation of athletes to stay engaged in sports, fostering both their physical and personal growth. It would help create opportunities for youth leagues, scholarships, and coaching, and give families from Eastern Oregon, and all over the state, a chance to connect with the game at the highest level.

As a father, I want my son to have access to the best possible resources and to be able to dream big. With MLB in Portland, that dream would feel a little closer, not just for him, but for countless other kids who have the same passion for the game. I hope you will consider the far-reaching benefits that bringing an MLB team to Portland will have, not only for the city but for all of Oregon.

Thank you for your time and for considering this exciting opportunity for our state.

Sincerely,
Whit Bender