

Submitter: Jodi Elizondo
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

My name is Dr. Jodi Elizondo and I am the Director of District Improvement Initiatives and Grants for the Ontario School District. I am advocating for the \$1.5 million investment into the Oregon Rural Community Schoolyard Program. Ontario is one of three schoolyard projects in Oregon that would greatly benefit from this funding. Ontario is unique in the state for the layered challenges it faces, to include having the highest poverty in the state and a rural location far from Oregon resources. We also have a very disproportionate number of marijuana dispensaries (14 in a city of 11,000), bringing huge swells in population from the Idaho side to further tax our resources and increase various risks to our community daily.

These variables create a high transient environment. It has proven difficult to create community among residents amid all of these stressors. This investment would create an outdoor space that would benefit our school and community, accomplishing something we are not able to do on our own. There is simply too much poverty for our citizens to pay for these types of projects.

Ontario should be considered the eastern "anchor" for Oregon; however, we are often overlooked due to our distance from where decisions are made and priorities placed. My hope is that the state demonstrates recognition of the need to help build and support Ontario residents and in particular, the children, by making this allocation a priority. Although we face many challenges and cannot change the circumstances of our various adversities, we have always remained proud Oregonians who work hard and care deeply for our community and kids. This project is not a "want". It is a "need". I respectfully request your support in helping us bring this vital outdoor resource to our school and residents. Thank you for allowing me a voice in your decision.