



April 16, 2025

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to voice my strong support for Senate Bill 5505 and to specifically advocate for the inclusion of \$4,866,000.00 million in capital construction funding for the Regional Emergency and Evacuee Center at the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center (OSFEC).

Over the past several years, OSFEC has repeatedly demonstrated its vital role in supporting the State of Oregon during times of crisis—serving as a site for wildfire evacuation, cold weather shelters, COVID-19 testing and vaccination clinics, and emergency storage for agencies including the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Education, and the National Guard. While OSFEC has consistently stepped up to serve the community, it has done so with limited funds and aging infrastructure that falls short of the needs for a truly effective, safe, and coordinated emergency response center.

To address these gaps and prepare for future emergency needs, OSFEC is seeking critical improvements identified in consultation with key partners including the Oregon National Guard, Marion County Emergency Management, Salem Health, the City of Salem, the American Red Cross, and others. The proposed upgrades included in this ask are outlined as:

- Emergency communications enhancements to align with state and local systems, including PA systems, public Wi-Fi, security, and IT infrastructure.
- A digital messaging system to support real-time coordination between evacuation sites, staging areas, response personnel, and those in need.
- Replacement of poor condition and dilapidated fencing and gates with secure, campus-wide safety infrastructure.
- Upgrades to drinking water access through modern bottle filling stations and water container systems to support long-term emergency use.
- Installation of air conditioning units in the Pavilion building to ensure safe and comfortable shelter conditions during extreme heat events or prolonged emergency occupancy.

These improvements are essential to ensure that OSFEC can continue to serve as a reliable, safe, and fully functional Regional Emergency and Evacuee Center. With this investment, OSFEC will be better positioned to meet the evolving needs of Oregonians during natural disasters, public health crises, and other emergency needs.

While we are deeply appreciative of the \$4,866,000.00 million bond allocation, the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center (OSFEC) urgently requires the full \$21 million requested under HB 2304.

This facility is a critical statewide asset—supporting not only Oregon’s rich agricultural traditions through the annual Fair, but also acting as a place for our community to gather during key emergency response and community support center throughout the year. Despite stepping up time and again for the people of Oregon, OSFEC continues to operate with outdated infrastructure and limited resources.

The full \$21 million investment is essential to ensure that OSFEC can continue to fulfill its mission safely, efficiently, and sustainably for generations to come.

We respectfully urge full support of HB 2304 and the complete \$21 million funding request in this legislative session.

If support of the full ask of \$21 million cannot be committed to, I respectfully urge your support for this critical funding request within SB 5505. Thank you for your time and commitment to strengthening Oregon’s emergency response infrastructure and the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center.

Sincerely,

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