May 1, 2025

Senator Janeen Sollman
Representative Ricki Ruiz
Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for Senate Bill 5525

Dear Senator Sollman, Representative Ruiz, and members of the Subcommittee,

As a Cybersecurity Specialist and System Architect at CIS — who also serves as an Advisory Council member of the Oregon Cybersecurity Center of Excellence (OCCoE) — I'm writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 5525, which allocates funding to support the OCCoE through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.

CIS is a government risk pool that serves 98% of Oregon cities and 81% of counties with property, liability, cyber, and employee benefits coverage. We work closely with local governments throughout the state — particularly when they are at their most vulnerable. We have firsthand experience supporting members before, during, and after cyberattacks. We've helped them recover critical services, rebuild systems, and navigate the complex and costly aftermath of breaches.

That's why we believe OCCoE's mission is critical. Cities and counties are on the front lines of service delivery, often with limited technical staff and under increasing pressure from sophisticated cyber threats. The OCCoE offers a desperately needed solution — helping to educate, prepare, and protect local government entities across Oregon.

SB 5525 would provide $11.3 million to continue and expand this vital work. The OCCoE is uniquely positioned to:

1. **Strengthen Cyber Resilience:** Cities and counties will benefit from access to best practices, technical guidance, and practical tools to improve their cybersecurity posture.

2. **Provide Scalable Training:** Many of our members have small teams or none at all — making OCCoE's tailored training an essential resource for building internal capacity.

3. **Offer Affordable Threat Monitoring:** Through instructor led Security Operations Centers (SOC) at the University of Oregon and Oregon State University, public entities can benefit from eyes on glass actively monitoring their systems at a much lower cost than commercial providers.

4. **Support Incident Response:** When cyberattacks strike, a centralized expert resource like OCCoE can help local governments respond quickly and limit damage.

5. **Foster Collaboration:** OCCoE can serve as a hub for shared learning and peer support, connecting local governments that face similar challenges.

6. **Extend Workforce Reach:** OCCoE's collaboration with Oregon's higher education system helps develop the next generation of cybersecurity professionals, while also offering immediate benefits through hands-on student support for local agencies.

We've seen the impact a single incident can have on a small community — delayed utility bills, locked police records, lost public trust. These attacks aren't theoretical. They're happening. And without increased funding and support, more communities will find themselves unprepared.

By investing in OCCoE, you're not just supporting a program — you're helping to secure the very infrastructure that Oregonians rely on every day. I urge your full support for SB 5525.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Greg Hardin
Cybersecurity Specialist / System Architect