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5/2/2025
Joint Committee on Capital Construction
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Girod and Nosse and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

I write to you today in enthusiastic support of Western Oregon University's proposed data center project. As the Dean of Library and Academic Innovation, I see firsthand the transformative potential this proposed facility holds—not just for our students and faculty but also for the broader communities of Monmouth, Independence, and Polk County.

The current data center is housed in a 60-year-old masonry building, a former elementary classroom. The facility has insufficient HVAC and seismic safety features. I have been in the current data center and can attest to the fact that it is outdated and not an appropriate environment for the technology housed within it. The proposed data center will significantly enhance data security and ensure resilient and sustainable operations well into the future. The proposed project will also increase research opportunities, applied learning, and technological innovation. It will provide students across disciplines with hands-on experience in managing, analyzing, and safeguarding data—critical skills in today's workforce. Whether in computer science, digital humanities, public policy, or business analytics, our students will benefit from real-world projects and the ability to apply what they learn in meaningful, career-relevant ways.

Beyond academics, the data center will serve as a hub for collaboration and regional development. Western Oregon University has long been a community-centered institution, and this project reflects our continued commitment to building partnerships that benefit our campus and our surrounding communities. The center will create new avenues for data-driven grant work, support local government initiatives, and provide infrastructure for joint projects with the cities of Monmouth, Independence, and Polk County. These collaborations will generate shared knowledge, improve services, and foster regional innovation.

Investing in this data center invests in Oregon's students, workforce, and rural innovation. I urge you to support this forward-looking project that bridges education and economic development. Thank you for your consideration and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Chelle Batchelor
Dean, Library and Academic Innovation
Western Oregon University