

May 5, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,

As a life-long member of the Ukiah Community and 4th generation Ukiah School graduate, I am writing to strongly support the Ukiah School Facilities Repair and Viability Project

The community of Ukiah is dependent on the success and viability of its school. Ukiah School District was founded in 1918 with the current building constructed in 1923. It not only serves the students, but also houses the community library, in the largest facility for gatherings and meetings, and is our only regional emergency shelter. This building is vital to all members of our community.

This project would address some very important building components that are reaching their serviceable lifetime and are in need of repair such as siding, exterior doors, and interior lighting. Other issues such as the replacement of the current elevator system and a small amount of asbestos have been maintained but need to be addressed in a more permanent way. If the grant is approved, updated building access will greatly improve building functionality and public access. The improvements to the main building will increase energy efficiency, improve health and safety, increase accessibility, and replace needed aging infrastructure to meet current standards. There are no district funds for these types of projects without a significant outside funding source. These improvements would allow the district to better serve our community now and for the future.

We live surrounded by beautiful forest lands. For tens of miles around Ukiah, most of the land is publicly owned. This limits the options for traditional funding avenues. Additionally, our forests are facing the same increased risk for catastrophic fire as all other parts of our State. The school is the only building able to serve as an emergency shelter, a command post, a base camp for emergency responders, and gathering point for citizens when things go wrong. Our school building is continually requested for State and Federal emergency use as they respond to fire dangers. If other natural or environmental dangers were to strike, the school would be called upon to serve as a Red Cross Shelter. This building must be ready, there are no other options.

This community has done everything right with the limited resources available to it. The school district has tried to propose a bond, but the cost per thousand is just too much for the realities of our citizens. What we ask the State for now is for help in providing our school with the funds to become a safe, modern facility that will allow them to continue to serve students for another 100 years. This project will not only secure the school building but also honor the investment that educators, students, families, and community members have made through our shared history. Ukiah School is a truly special place and vital part of rural Oregon.

I urge you to support the Ukiah School Facilities Repair and Viability Project. Our state is stronger with strong and healthy rural communities. This is an important moment to invest in them and their future.

Thank you for your service and consideration of this request and all you each do for Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Barber", written in a cursive style.

Laura Barber