



May 9, 2025

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

Bill: SB 5531

RE: Testimony on Osborn Aquatic Center Funding

Dear Co-Chair Senator Girod, Co-Chair Representative Nosse, and Committee members:

On behalf of Visit Corvallis, I am writing to express strong support for funding to reopen the Osborn Aquatic Center through SB 5531. As the Executive Director of Corvallis' destination marketing organization, I see firsthand how vital this facility is—not just for local families and recreational swimmers but for the broader tourism economy that supports our community.

When large regional and state swim meets were regularly held at Osborn, our hotel data (via STR reports) consistently showed a 10% to 20% increase in occupancy on those dates. That boost is especially critical during the slower winter months, when hotel occupancy in Corvallis averages just 33% in December and 39% in January. These events didn't just fill hotel rooms—they brought additional business to local restaurants, coffee shops, and stores.

Businesses within a mile of Osborn have seen a drop in foot traffic since classes and meets stopped. These events used to bring a steady stream of customers—families and participants would shop or grab a bite before events, and others would do the same while waiting.

The closure of Osborn comes at an already challenging time for Corvallis tourism. Hotel occupancy in 2024 was just 52%, down 3.7% from the previous year. A contributor to the decline has been the PAC-12 realignment, which reduced the number of visiting fans traveling to Oregon State University. Reopening Osborn would be a start to counterbalance this decline by reestablishing a dependable source of visitor-driven economic activity.

Tourism is an economic driver in Benton County and Corvallis. In 2024, visitor spending generated \$180.5 million, supporting 1,950 local jobs and producing \$3.8 million in local tax revenue, and \$5.5 million in state revenue. These dollars help support Corvallis businesses.

SB 5531 offers an opportunity to reinvest in a facility that contributes to health, wellness, and economic vibrancy. Osborn isn't just a swimming pool—it's a place that brings people together, supports youth programs, and plays an important role in boosting tourism during slower seasons.

Reopening the Osborn Aquatic Center would be a tangible way to support Corvallis' community well-being and economic vitality. Thank you for your consideration of this matter and your service to Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina Rehklau".

Christina Rehklau
Executive Director
Visit Corvallis

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