

Date:	June 10th, 2025
To:	Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Walters and Reschke, and Members of the House Committee on Revenue
From:	Association of Oregon Counties President, Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer
Subject:	Support – HB 3518

For the record, my name is John Shafer, and I am the President of the Association of Oregon Counties and a Umatilla County Commissioner. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of HB 3518.

Back in March, when this bill received its first public hearing, I, along with many of AOC's county assessors, tax collectors, and commissioners, impressed upon this committee the critical need to fund our A&T departments through increased revenues into the CAFFA grant program. If you haven't already, I encourage you to re-read some of the written testimony that our members submitted for this bill back then to see the full scope of support for this bill across the state.

And just yesterday, I had the opportunity to meet with county commissioners and administrators from all over the state to discuss our statewide and national policy priorities, and they reaffirmed to me that this is a topmost priority for their counties and AOC this year. And trust me, I wouldn't have driven over 250 miles each way today, to and from Pendleton, to be here if HB 3518 didn't mean this much to Oregon's counties and the districts we serve!

I know the members of this committee have already heard a lot about this bill from Justin and Erik, and you will hear more from them soon about the technical changes and ROI that exists for local taxing districts and the state, so I simply want to share this perspective to you: as a long-time public servant and local elected official who has felt the call to serve my community—as many of you have—and answered it, we do not do this work because it is easy or always filled with good and prosperous days. We do it on behalf of our constituents so that they will know better days and so that they can access quality public services.

Our county assessors and tax collectors do the exact same thing, and sometimes under financially challenging conditions and without much thanks or acknowledgement. A healthy A&T department is the cornerstone to consistent and stable revenue for each and every city, school, special district, and county; and so I want to impress upon the

committee the fact that this is *not* a self-serving county function—but it is a public service, mandated by state statute, that counties provide to all local governments and the Oregonians we all serve. The service provided by county assessment and taxation offices maintains and grows the property tax asset, which is the bedrock on which funding for our city, school, and special district partners rely on. When the property tax asset fails, we all fail.

Investing in CAFFA directly benefits the critical work that taxing districts do day-in and day-out, and it will help ensure that all local governments will have reliable funding and the resources needed to provide the excellent public services that Oregonians expect. County A&T offices consider local taxing districts to be a constituent, and it is my humble opinion that we have done an incredible job over the years serving them, in spite of compounding financial pressures, increasing workloads, and limited resources.

On behalf of Oregon's 36 counties big and small, who all need more CAFFA support, I urge this committee to support HB 3518 so that we can get back to delivering the level of service our constituents and taxing districts expect and deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to working with you to strengthen Oregon's commitment to maintaining a robust and healthy property tax asset for all districts and Oregonians.

Sincerely,

John Shafer
AOC President and Umatilla County Commissioner