



Letter of Joint Opposition to HB 2725

Respected State Legislators,

As representatives of the counties most impacted by HB 2725, we unitedly stand opposed to the proposed bill and amendment. HB 2725 is a response to HB 2009 (2023). In that omnibus bill, HB 2009 provided a much-needed adjustment to payment in lieu of tax programs by increasing the participation of special districts. Unfortunately, a late amendment added ports as a primary party to any Strategic Investment Program (SIP). *Notably, none of the staff materials or testimony addressed the purpose of adding ports.* The result is that the scope of port taxing districts has extended far beyond their operational boundaries, thus creating an adverse impact on a county's ability to utilize SIP incentives. Including ports in the SIP equation on equal grounds with counties and cities allows the 24 ports to have a disproportionate representation over other special districts and creates a *de facto* veto power for the ports in 14 counties when it comes to SIP incentives.

While HB 2725 attempts to reduce this impact of HB 2009 (2023), it fails to do so comprehensively and focuses the program on a small number of counties in an arbitrary manner, devoid of any justification or explanation. The introduced bill HB 2725 effectively results in HB 2009 impacting only three counties: Columbia, Morrow, and Umatilla. The amended bill would directly impact five counties with ports along the Columbia River: Hood River, Wasco, Gilliam, Morrow and Umatilla. **Neither action provides any reason why these counties need to be treated differently from the rest of the state.**

The counties along the Columbia River are being unduly targeted through HB 2725. We ask for your support in treating all counties equally in consideration of SIP use for economic development. If the western counties can utilize SIP agreements without port participation, then all counties should have that capability. We ask for your consideration for equitable treatment and to oppose HB 2725 until all counties are treated equally.

Sincerely,

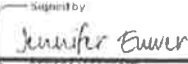
Gilliam County

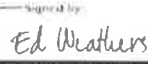

Judge Chris Patnode


Commissioner Leah Watkins

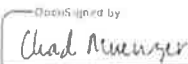

Commissioner Grant Wilkins

Hood River County


Chair Jennifer Euwer


Commissioner Ed Weathers

Commissioner Leticia Moretti


Commissioner Chad Muenzer


Commissioner Arthur Babitz

Morrow County



Chair David Sykes

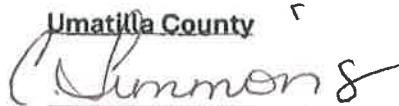


Commissioner Jeff Wenholtz



Commissioner August Peterson

Umatilla County



Chair Cindy Timmons



Commissioner Dan Dorran



Commissioner John Shafer

Wasco County



Chair Scott Hege



Commissioner Phil Brady



Commissioner Jeff Justesen