

Submitter: Tom Hoyt
On Behalf Of: In support of McKenzie River Discovery Center
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5701

February 13, 2026

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
From: Thomas H. Hoyt, Past President and Board Member, McKenzie River
Discovery Center
Re: Support for McKenzie River Discovery Center Funding / Bill # SB5701

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

I write in strong support of state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center (MRDC), a shovel-ready project under active construction that will deliver immediate economic recovery to the fire-impacted McKenzie River corridor.

Our funding request is \$4.8 million. If obtained, this gives us the money to finish our capital assets—buildings and exhibits—and we open the Discovery Center in 2027!

The MRDC is not a concept—it is happening now. With all permits secured, construction underway, exhibits ready for fabrication at OMSI, and pilot programming in development for implementation in 2027, this project represents a smart investment in rural economic resilience.

MRDC will attract 50,000 annual visitors, generating \$7 million in regional economic activity, creating year-round jobs in a community still recovering from the catastrophic 2020 Holiday Farm Fire. These visitors will travel through Oregon's tourism gateway cities—Portland, Eugene, Bend, and Medford—supporting hotels, restaurants, and retail throughout the state while discovering a world-class environmental education destination in rural Lane County.

Thank you for giving this your serious consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas H. Hoyt
Past President, Current Board Member
McKenzie River Discovery Center