



COMMISSIONER HEATHER BUCH, District 5, East Lane

PUBLIC SERVICE BUILDING / 125 EAST 8TH AVENUE / EUGENE, OR 97401

February 13, 2026

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
RE SB 5701, Relating to State Financial Administration

Dear Chairs Girod and Nosse, and Members of the Committee:

I write in strong support of the state funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center, a shovel-ready project under construction that will help drive economic recovery in the fire-impacted McKenzie River corridor.

The Discover Center is no longer a concept. With permits secured, construction in progress, exhibits prepared for fabrication with OMSI, and pilot programming in development for implementation in 2027, this project represents a smart and timely investment in rural economic resilience.

Once complete, the Center is expected to attract approximately 50,000 visitors annually and generate an estimated \$7 million in regional economic activity while creating year-round jobs in a community still recovering from the devastating Holiday Farm fire. Visitors will travel through Oregon's tourism gateway cities—including Portland, Eugene, Bend, and Medford—supporting hotels, restaurants, and retail across the state while discovering a world-class environmental education destination in rural Lane County.

The \$4.8 million funding request will complete the Center's capital assets—buildings and exhibits—allowing the facility to open in 2027. As a county leader, I view the Discovery Center as essential economic infrastructure that helps diversify the local tax base beyond timber and seasonal tourism while strengthening long-term community resilience.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this important project.

Sincerely,

Heather Buch, Vice Chair
East Lane County Commissioner