

Submitter: Ken Engelman

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB5701

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means Re: SB5701

Re: Support for Funding the McKenzie River Discovery Center

Date: February 13, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs Fred Girod and Rob Nosse, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ken Engelman, and I am the president of McKenzie Community Communications. Thank you for the opportunity to express strong support for state funding of this shovel-ready project, now under active construction in Leaburg. The Discovery Center played a key role in recovery efforts following 2020 Holiday Farm wildfire by opening its hatchery building as a supply point for food water, blankets and other items for community members.

McKenzie Community Communications has developed a functioning network of over 50 handheld radios and four public wifi sites along the 60-mile stretch of Hwy. 126. Should the need arise again in the future we would again look to the Discovery Center site for community support, particularly thanks to the newly enlarged parking area – ideal for locating a wifi site available for public access.

All required permits for the Discovery Center have been secured, construction is in progress. This is not a concept—it is a project already moving toward completion. The request is \$4.8 million to complete capital construction, facilities, and exhibits is a practical, high-impact commitment to rural resilience, economic recovery, and environmental education in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support.

Ken Engelman

President

McKenzie River Community Communications

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