

Submitter: Mary Sooh
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or SB5701
Topic:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Sooh, and I care deeply about the economic future of the McKenzie Valley.

Since the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire, our community has faced not only devastating ecological

loss, but real economic hardship. Homes and businesses were destroyed. Tourism declined.

Families relocated. Recovery has been slow and uneven.

The McKenzie River Discovery Center represents a smart, forward-looking investment in rural resilience.

Designed to welcome up to 50,000 visitors annually, MRDC is projected to generate roughly \$7

million per year in regional economic activity — supporting local lodging, restaurants, outfitters,

guides, and small businesses. It transforms a dormant historic hatchery site into a year-round

destination rooted in education, heritage tourism, and stewardship.

Through its partnership with OMSI, the Center will offer nationally respected, experiential

exhibits that draw visitors from across Oregon and beyond — not just once, but repeatedly.

This is not speculative development. Construction is underway. Permits are secured.

Programs

are already operating on site.

MRDC positions the McKenzie Valley as a model for sustainable rural recovery after wildfire — strengthening both our economy and our identity.

Thank you.