

Submitter: Marjorie Mealey
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction
Measure, Appointment or SB5701
Topic:
Leaburg Volunteer Library
PO Box 267, Walternative, OR 97489
2/14/2026

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

I write in strong support of state funding, through SB 5701, 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.

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. The MRDC is expected to attract as many as 50,000 annual visitors, generating an estimated \$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.

The funding request is \$4.8 million. If obtained, this provides the money to finish the capital assets—buildings and exhibits—and Discovery Center opening is expected in 2027!

As the library director, I see MRDC as a vital hands-on science curriculum supporting Oregon's environmental literacy goals that complements what we offer here at the library.

The project is already 54% funded through \$7 million in private philanthropy. State investment will complete what the community has already started, delivering a first-of-its-kind Oregon environmental education center that honors our natural legacy while driving economic recovery where it's needed most.

I urge the Committee to support funding for the McKenzie River Discovery Center.

Respectfully,
/S/

Marjorie S. Mealey, Director
Leaburg Library