



April 17, 2021

Joint Ways and Means Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Tri-Chairs Senator Steiner Hayward, Senator Johnson, Representative Rayfield and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in regarding funding priorities for the American Rescue Plan (ARP). On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,600+ business members, the organization thanks you for your dedication to distributing these new federal funds equitably across the state. We understand the needs are great throughout the state and appreciate your consideration of the following requests for our Central Oregon region.

#### **Affordable Housing**

The City of Bend and Deschutes County are experiencing a housing crisis that has reached a critical state, and the Chamber has been squarely focused on additional resources to support affordable and workforce housing development. The following projects would add inventory both for AMI limited housing, as well as workforce housing:

- Cleveland Apartments - Permanent Supportive Housing (\$8.5M)
- Legacy Landing Second Phase (\$8.7M)
- Ariel South Apartments (\$1.5M)
- 27th Street Townhomes (\$3M)
- WaterCress Way Townhomes (\$2M)

Additionally, transitional housing has become an acute issue in our community as we seek to support and house our homeless population. A request for a **Warming Shelter (\$2M)** to provide temporary housing for our City's most vulnerable residents is a much-needed investment that can save lives during the cold winter months. Tragically, this past winter saw several deaths from exposure due to lack of emergency shelter.

#### **OSU-Cascades Expansion**

Employers in Central Oregon rely on access to OSU-Cascades to meet our growing demand for career-ready talent. The proposed **OSU Cascades Student Success Center** is a vital project to prepare students for the workforce and to receive the services they need to thrive and graduate. The Student Success Center is modeled after a similar student facility at OSU's Corvallis campus and will house a variety of vital programs to help students graduate ready for the workforce, including career counseling, internship coordination, financial aid counseling, veterans services and other important student services.

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The need for this center is so great that students voted to tax themselves through student fees, pledging \$5M toward matching state funds. Students have already raised \$1.7M toward that goal and are asking the state to approve \$13.8M toward the project.

Additionally, the concept of an **OSU-Cascades Innovation District** has been a long-term project of the Bend Chamber and its partners in the public and private sector. A request for \$15M would provide initial funding for site preparation and infrastructure for the former gravel pit. The Chamber is particularly excited about the Innovation District project, as it will provide an excellent opportunity to integrate the work being done on campus with the business community for key areas of industry such as outdoor product development, forestry science and technology, among others.

### **Child Care Provider Support**

Prior to COVID, Central Oregon was experiencing a child care crisis with severe shortages of space for infants and toddlers. The pandemic forced many providers to close or reduce capacity even further due to workforce pressures and restrictions. The Federal Government has appropriated \$39B to help child care providers across the country. We urge the swift distribution of Oregon's share to community-based providers to assist with rent, mortgage, insurance, utility bills, payroll and debts incurred because of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Tourism and Events**

One of Central Oregon's primary economic drivers is the tourism industry and related event-based tourism. Whether it is one of region's signature mountain bike or trail running race series or an outdoor sports festival, this segment of our economy has been particularly hart hit during the pandemic. The live event industry has been on a complete hiatus since 2020, and many of our local event producers and companies may not re-open. The Chamber supports the creation of a **one-time grant program to aid event companies** and help them weather the ongoing closure of their industry. Not only are the events this industry produces part of the fabric of our community, but there are significant downstream economic benefits from sub contractors and vendors as well as the associated tourism spending.

We appreciate your consideration of these important requests for our community, and understand the difficult choices that lie ahead. Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the key needs in our community.

Regards,



Katy Brooks  
President + CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce

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