



June 14, 2021

Mayor Sally Russell
Bend City Councilors
Delivery via E-mail

Mayor Russell and Council Members,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,500 members, we appreciate the opportunity to provide you and City staff our input on funding initiatives for the City's share of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). We understand the needs are great in our city and the greater Central Oregon region, and City leadership has challenging decisions ahead.

The Bend Chamber's ARPA funding priorities are driven by our policy goals and objectives as set by the Board of Directors. These are issues with a long history of Chamber advocacy and collaboration with community partners.

Housing -- The Bend Chamber supports investing a portion of the City's federal ARPA funding into housing projects to support our houseless community members. We have seen recent investments in a low barrier shelter and warming shelter for the winter months, but the need is still great as our houseless population have increased by 13 percent, according to a recent survey. Funding for additional transitional housing units with proximity to wrap around social services is a wise investment of ARPA funding. We also support investment in a variety of types of housing that meets the needs of this population.

Additionally, the Chamber supports directing funds to alleviate the shortage of workforce housing, as growing numbers of Bend residents are being pushed out of the City due to exorbitant housing pricing and historically low inventory. While this is a longer term investment, we envision investing ARPA funds to leverage private investment and spur development of the Central District as the City's new urban corridor.

Infrastructure -- The Bend Chamber supports investing a portion of the City's federal ARPA funding into planning and implementation of the Hawthorne overpass project. As the entryway into the Central District (BCD), the completion of this project is key to linking the BCD to downtown Bend and providing equitable multi-modal transportation options to Bend residents. We understand there is potential funding available with the passage of a new federal infrastructure bill, however we support using ARPA funds to complete the planning phase to demonstrate commitment to a shovel ready project.

Child Care -- The Bend Chamber supports the OSU-C and COCC "Little Kits" child care program which will create a new labor pipeline for the industry, add to COCC and OSU-C's curriculum on child care, education and early human development. Funds will support a new child care center for 100 children

with plans to expand to other locations in the Central Oregon region. The city's contribution of \$100,000 per year would help pay for development of this critical program.

As council is well aware, child care in Central Oregon has been a long standing challenge. Conditions have worsened across the state during the pandemic, with our region designated a child care "desert." The shortage's effect on our community stretches beyond families. Reliable child care provides relief to working and student parents, and supports businesses and community members who count on a dependable workforce.

Within these strategic funding priorities lie many opportunities to create thoughtful and proactive public policy that supports economic vitality with a focus on equity and inclusivity for the entire Bend community. We look forward to working together on the implementation of these programs, and once again appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the process.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", is positioned to the left of a vertical line that extends downwards.

Katy Brooks
President + CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce