

May 7, 2021

Dear Chairs Girod and Holvey, and members of the Committee:

My name is Billie Jo Smith, and I was the Mayor of Toledo from 2014 to 2018. I am requesting that you grant \$3 million in Capital Construction funding for the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center. This written testimony expands on the live testimony I presented to the Committee at today's hearing.

The following are reasons supporting the selection of the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center for your funding allocation:

- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT IS INCREDIBLY HIGH** – In 2016, the Toledo City Council voted to close the pool. To save it, the community established the Greater Toledo Pool Recreation District, which includes much of rural East Lincoln County, AND VOTED FOR A PERMANENT PROPERTY TAX TO COVER THE POOL OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE. Before COVID, the Greater Toledo Pool had over 13,000 visits per year.
- **LIFE AND SAFETY** – The swimming lessons provided to children in all of the East Lincoln County elementary schools for decades have saved many lives. In 2019, 4,476 swim lessons were taught. The pool is also a training center for life guards and water safety instructors, and has provided firefighter and law enforcement water rescue training.
- **HEALTH AND FITNESS** - Aquatic centers provide healthy exercise for all ages reducing long-term healthcare costs for participants. Heart disease, obesity, limited mobility, weakness, asthma and related diseases are impacted. Lap swimming and a Masters Swim Team provide additional fitness experiences for adults, and the new Center will include a fitness addition with exercise equipment.
- **LOWER DELINQUENCY RATE** - Communities that have swimming pools experience significant reductions in juvenile crime among kids that would otherwise find their way into trouble. In addition to recreational swim times, the Greater Toledo Pool is providing after school swim clubs and teams for elementary and junior high youth, and hosts the high school swim team.
- **FAMILY RECREATION** - Solid research has shown that pools provide the best possible family recreation.
- **ECONOMIC BENEFITS** - Studies show that pools increase property values, draw people seeking to buy homes, attract businesses and indicate a vibrant community.
- **PUBLIC SHOWERS** – The showers and changing rooms are available for community use. These are important for the houseless, and for residents with low wells during the late summer.
- **SOCIAL GATHERING PLACE** – The facility and programs foster friendships and important connections for all ages. It is also a venue for special events and community meetings.
- **THE IMPROVEMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL** - The old pool tank and plumbing (installed in 1948) have been seriously leaking for years – despite numerous repairs. The serious water loss can only be resolved by complete replacement. Engineering studies have determined that the original building foundation and walls are inadequate and the roof stability is questionable. The renewed Center will be water and energy efficient, and structurally sound.
- **OTHER FUNDING DOORS ARE CLOSED** – State and Federal Government programs that provide funding for recreational capital construction are not open for indoor pool funding. Also, major foundations have other priorities or are not accepting proposals for pools. Oregon's ARPA funds and the Lottery Capital Construction funds are basically our only possibilities at the state level.

Community grants and donors have paid for our completed "Master Plan" and several ADA improvements that will remain part of the new facility. We are ready to proceed as soon as funding is available.

Thank you, Committee, for considering the Greater Toledo Aquatic and Community Center for Capital Construction funds. This Center is so important to our rural community.