



Tillamook County Board of Commissioners

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TTY Oregon Relay Service

David Yamamoto, Chair

Erin D. Skaar, Vice-Chair

Mary Faith Bell, Commissioner

March 23, 2022

Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley

Washington, D.C.

Delivered via email

Re: Nehalem Bay Health Center and Pharmacy

Dear Senators Wyden and Merkley:

The Tillamook County Board of Commissioners is pleased to provide an endorsement and support for a request for Congressionally Directed Funding for an important initiative being led by the Nehalem Bay Health District (the district).

As you know, quality, close to home primary health care in rural Oregon remains a major challenge in many communities in our state. Many of our constituents travel long distances to access care and pharmacy services. A proposal advanced by the district – a new, state of the art health center and pharmacy in Wheeler, Oregon – will improve access and delivery of primary care in north Tillamook County. The new facility will be owned by the district but operated by a local non-profit – the Nehalem Bay Health Center and Pharmacy – and will remain a Federal Qualified Health Center, offering health care to anyone regardless of ability to pay.

The health center/pharmacy proposed by the district will more than double the size of the current aging clinic in Wheeler and its much too small pharmacy. The current facility is outdated, under sized and offers no opportunity for expansion that would facilitate specialty services – pediatrics for example – and potentially dental care. The district's property in Wheeler, adjacent to U.S. Highway 101, features both proper zoning and much improved visibility for the new center.

We are encouraged that the district's plans are based on a comprehensive strategic plan developed with extensive community input. That plan identified clearly that enhanced primary health care services are a critical need in the community. Development of the new health center will also allow the district, again as part of its overall strategic plan, to repurpose the existing clinic location to address other critical community needs, including workforce housing.

We support the Nehalem Bay Health District's request for Congressional Directed Funding and respectfully request that you give the district's request every possible consideration.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR TILLAMOOK COUNTY, OREGON

David Yamamoto, Chair

Erin D. Skaar, Vice-Chair

Mary Faith Bell, Commissioner