

KHANH PHAM
STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 23



March 4, 2026

Dear Colleagues and the Public,

I voted no on SB 1501. I want to begin by acknowledging that this bill has improved during the course of our discussions. I appreciate Senator Lieber's engagement and the amendment she brought forward, which reflects a shared concern that Oregonians receive a fair deal when significant public resources are involved. Her amendment is a meaningful improvement that ensures our state has an experienced negotiator reviewing comparable deals in similar markets as the lease agreement is developed. I also wish to acknowledge that the Portland Trail Blazers are a cherished, invaluable civic institution that brings immeasurable cultural and economic benefit to our city and state, and I'm fully supportive of the initiative to invest in ensuring this franchise stays in Portland.

At the same time, I am concerned about our limited General Obligation bond capacity at a time when schools are closing due to inadequate budgets, when requests for eviction prevention and homelessness services go unfunded, and when critical shelter projects do not receive capital support, we must be able to demonstrate careful stewardship of public dollars. When major public financing is involved, we must be able to justify and explain the return on investments for taxpayers.

With the limited time available, I spoke with local elected leaders in Portland, community advisors, and stakeholders connected to long-term redevelopment efforts in the Albina community. Over 120 constituents and other Oregonians wrote to my office, with 70% urging support only with strong taxpayer protections. Those conversations reinforced both the economic importance of this district and the importance of maintaining strong public leverage in any negotiations moving forward.

More broadly, I share the reluctance many Oregonians feel about publicly subsidizing a billionaire-owned franchise at the expense of other important public needs. I introduced the -5 amendment to ensure that private capital contribution and revenue sharing were explicitly considered. Research across the country consistently shows that public investments in sports facilities often fail to deliver the broad economic benefits that are promised unless there are strong, legally binding community benefit agreements in place. Whatever economic benefit is derived from the public subsidy of this stadium must be weighed against the economic cost of disinvesting in housing, education, and other public services, and in these times of economic uncertainty I simply must prioritize working Oregonians' basic needs. While the bill has improved and I appreciate the work done to strengthen it, I need to see stronger safeguards to ensure public returns and community benefits.

For these reasons, I voted no on SB 1501.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Khanh Pham".

Khanh Pham
State Senator