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January 12, 2022

The Honorable Emily Wicks
State Representative, 38th Legislative District
332 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Support for HB 1025, providing local parks and recreation agencies with a 1/10th of 1 cent sales tax funding option subject to voter approval

Dear Rep. Wicks:

I am writing on behalf of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, the coalition-based organization with a 30-year history of successful collaborations with government agencies and public land managers, businesses, educational institutions and diverse citizen interests to conserve and enhance the landscape from Seattle across the Cascades to central Washington, working toward a long-term balance between people and nature.

We strongly support House Bill 1025, legislation you have prime-sponsored to provide local parks and recreation agencies with a vital new funding tool they can take to their voters.

At a time when COVID-19-wracked local agencies are dealing with budget cuts, maintenance backlog, and more demand than ever on the facilities, fields, trails and public spaces they manage, a bill like HB 1025 becomes critically important. These same parks agencies have also seen events-based and fee-based programming canceled across the board and many of them are facing property tax pro-rationing. The fiscal challenges are immense.

Yet despite these challenges, COVID-19 has helped us rediscover just how much people value their parks and open spaces. Parks are the venues that help us with physical health and fresh air, that provide low-cost and no-cost recreational opportunities for the public, that make our communities more vibrant and attractive and desirable.

We greatly appreciate that HB 1025 is providing jurisdictions with another "tool in the toolbox" to help ensure that the cost of paying for parks and recreation services is spread among all residents and visitors of local communities, especially as many of them experience continued population growth and more users than ever before. We understand that you are looking at adding language to this bill to better ensure equity in the uses of the funding and in enhancing access to parks facilities and services for historically under-served and marginalized communities. We think adding such language is well worthwhile.

In any case, please do add us to your list of supporters and let us know what we can do to help support this effort.

Sincerely,

Amy Brockhaus
Deputy Director

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