

## Mahlon Vigesaa Testimony in Support of HB 3169

### **Testimony:**

Thank you Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Bonham and Fahey, and members of the committee. As a longtime banker who has worked extensively in Oregon, my experiences in banking have been broad and have included founding Centerpointe Bank, accepting cannabis industry deposits, and then navigating a subsequent merger which forced our bank to drop the cannabis industry entirely. I personally know the need and value of HB 3169, to allow limited charter banks that can work with the cannabis industry here in Oregon.

As the founder and President of Centerpointe bank, we decided to take extensive risks to help the local cannabis businesses, and opened ourselves to receiving cannabis deposits. We were proud to offer this service to sound, law-abiding businesses in our area that otherwise had nowhere to turn. We were unable to avoid incredibly high costs due to the hoops we had to jump through, including extensive audits from both federal and state regulators, and yet many businesses jumped at the opportunity to utilize our banking.

However, later when we decided to merge our bank, we felt the need to drop our cannabis clientele due to fears this merger would not be approved. This left these local businesses without a legal banking option in our area.

There are many issues that come along with the rapidly growing cannabis industry including lots of cash and nowhere to put it. This system leads to crime, tax evasion, and more. Cannabis businesses face these intense dangers and challenges unnecessarily. By allowing safe harbor for these limited charter banks, Oregon can protect these businesses and these communities. It is the obvious next step.

As a banker I consistently search for good opportunities of industries to support and invest in. Creating the potential for these limited charter banks to handle cannabis deposits is an opportunity for Oregon bankers as well as for the cannabis industry. It is a consistently growing industry, and allowing bankers to engage with it is only good for the industry, the bankers, and their communities. HB 3169 is an obvious solution to an unnecessary problem. I hope we can count on your support.