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VIA EMAIL: (jcss.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

To: The Joint Committee on Student Success
From: Catalyst Law, LLC - Kimberly Pray and Kate Kilberg, Owners
Member of Business for a Better Portland
Re: Support of HB 3427

Dear Chair and Members of the Joint Committee,

My name is Kimberly Pray and I live in Portland, Oregon, where, together with my law partner, Kate Kilberg, we founded Catalyst Law, LLC (“Catalyst”) four years ago. As a women-owned and Certified B Corporation law firm, Catalyst received the Portland Business Journal award for “most diverse small/medium law firm” for the last two consecutive years. We urge you today ask that your committee and the Oregon Legislature does everything it can to finalize and pass a bill this year that results in a significant investment in education across the state.

Four years after our humble start, we now employ nine attorneys and staff, and between all of the team, we are proud parents of 11 pre-school and school-age children. Catalyst’s success is a part of the economic growth across the state. Since 2014, we have doubled our revenue each year in operation. We rely on attorneys and other legal professionals with highly specialized skills sets, years of education, and a lifetime tenure. To attract such an employee, we are less than competitive than law firms in other states due to the failure of the state to fund our public-school systems.

Furthermore, the students matriculating from Oregon K-12 schools and colleges are not as prepared to enter the workforce due to the underinvestment, which further hurts small businesses such as Catalyst because we need educated and skilled staff to continue to grow our legal practice.

Born and raised in Eugene, Oregon, my parents both taught in the Oregon public schools. I attended public schools from kindergarten to 12th grade before the passage of Measure 5. From there, I went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Brown University and, later My law

partner attended public schools in Ohio and Michigan, and from there, attended Harvard Law School.

Unfortunately, since my childhood, Oregon's graduation rates plummeted, school years contracted, and classroom sizes grew. Many upper-middle class and upper-class parents now send their children to increasingly competitive private schools or vie for admission to public schools that benefit from well-funded foundations. The "flight" from underfunded public schools further segregates our neighborhood schools by socio-economic class and separates us from our own neighbors.

My daughter is in her first year of kindergarten in the Dual Language Immersion program at our neighborhood Beach Elementary in Portland Public Schools. At the peak, she had 26 other classmates, ages 5 and 6, with only one teacher and one part-time assistant. While she and five other children arrived to kindergarten already knowing how to read and write, other children in her class did not know their ABCs or how to hold a pencil. This disparity forces understaffed educators to focus on the children that need the additional attention to reach grade level, and short-changes students arriving with the skills already in hand. While our family is committed to our neighborhood school because of positive experiences in the public schools of our childhood, the reality of education in Oregon is in stark contrast to these memories.

My parents, now retired teachers, rely on PERS for their retirement. It is not extravagant but makes up for the fact that we lived paycheck-to-paycheck for much of my childhood and they had nothing left to save for retirement. My husband, a state government employee, also is a member of PERS, and sees nothing close to the benefits enjoyed by the employees retiring with Tier One PERS. However, public servants need not serve as the scapegoat for state leaders and officials who, decades ago, made unrealistic projections and deferred the revenue shortfall to the next generation. Our business leaders and political leaders must be accountable to the next generation and refuse to shortchange their future.

This is why Catalyst supports true investment in the state education system to generate economic, social and equitable returns in our local communities for years to come. As a founding member of Business for a Better Portland, we believe that businesses need to do more than merely advocate for the interests of our industry. Instead, we are committed to advocating for the community that, in turn, supports our employees and their families.

It's long past time for the Oregon Legislature to pass a meaningful revenue reform package to invest in our state's human capital. It's time for quality education to return to Oregon for all students because it is the workforce of our future.

Yours Sincerely,



Kimberly Pray