



January 28, 2021

Oregon House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity
Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Cate, Vice-Chair Kropf
Members of the Committee

I'm Avery Pickard, Executive Director of the Oregon Economic Development Association. OEDA is the statewide association for Oregon's economic development community that works on the front line in job creation and growth of Oregon's economy. The OEDA network includes over 150 member organizations across the state- cities, counties, ports, utilities, economic development districts, tribal governments and other entities that practice economic development. Our network also includes partners in workforce, entrepreneurship & innovation, business finance and technical assistance providers like the SBDC network, and elected officials, and of course a close interrelation with our key state agency partner, Business Oregon. Each of the communities the members of this committee represent are members of OEDA.

One key function OEDA plays as a network is to collaborate continually to evolve the practice of economic development in Oregon. OEDA produces two Oregon Economic Development Conferences annually that bring our network together to share best practices and important knowledge. We also administer the Oregon Economic Development Training program and have graduated 16 Certified Oregon Economic Developers serving with distinction across the state to create economic opportunity. The OCED curriculum is one we designed specifically to train on economic development in this state, with our unique land use system and highly streamlined toolkit of business development programs.

Our network also works together to advance regional strategies that are designed to extend economic opportunity to those groups that have been historically shut out by traditional approaches in this field. As an appointee to the Governor's Racial Justice Council Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, OEDA is committed to the shared work of orienting state programs and resources toward a practice of economic development that pursues social and economic justice. We applaud our members' efforts in this area and feel the coming period of economic recovery is a critical opportunity to emphasize equity in recovery plans. As such, we're supporting the legislative concepts that have come out of that RJC subcommittee work including House Bill 2161 providing enhanced access to capital for small business owned by persons of color.

This relates to our other key function and the one I'd most like to highlight before this committee. As the lead champion of the policies, programs and resources that support successful economic development in Oregon, OEDA also operates a robust year-round advocacy program. Our advocacy includes support for effective economic development incentives and tools (Enterprise Zones, TIF/Urban Renewal, Opportunity Zones among others) and for the resourcing of Business Oregon and its funds and programs. Our member communities rely on key programs administered by this agency to support their work on the ground to create equitable, diverse and resilient regional economies.

Our 2021 Legislative Priorities which are adjoined to this testimony reflect the spread of our focus as an organization focused on “whole-pie” economic development. They include COVID Response Measures, Business Development Programs and Incentives, Industrial Lands and Infrastructure, State Financial Resources, Entrepreneurship, Workforce and Tax Climate. This session per these priorities we are partnering on a number of legislative efforts we believe will be integral to economic recovery both in the near term and in the years to come. I’ll make special mention of one bill that we worked with our network to develop the concept for. House Bill 2343 now in the Committee on Business and Labor allows local enterprise zone sponsoring agencies to elect to temporarily suspend enterprise zone employment requirements for participating firms as those firms work to sustain operations and re-hire workforce. This bill arose from discussions with our statewide network around one question – what were we seeing and hearing from local anchor firms about where they were actually encountering barriers to recovery and re-hiring. For so many of these business that are here in Oregon employing community members because they had the opportunity to participate in an enterprise zone program, COVID created a suppressed employment scenario that makes their zone participation vulnerable. Their ability to remain in the enterprise zone program, and local communities’ ability to assist them in remaining, will allow them to direct their precious resources to rehiring. I’d like to thank Representative Lively sincerely for his sponsorship of this bill and his commitment to working with the economic development community on recovery priorities. I’ve included the one-page advocacy sheet on this concept for your review, it lists our supportive partners.

We look forward to the opportunity to talk more about our priorities with regard to certain bills- I know we have meetings scheduled with a number of your offices in the coming days. In general however, my message to this committee is that we hope you will rely on OEDA as a consultative resource on economic development matters and priorities. We are here with a huge network of professional that do the work every day in your communities of “whole pie” economic development and they have an expert understanding of truly what it takes in terms of programs and resources to keep and grow quality jobs and what the obstacles are that we can work with you to address. We are here to work with you, provide information and insight to you from this expert community, and we thank you for your public service.

Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Cate, Vice-Chair Kropf, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share with you today and look forward to communicating more.

Avery Pickard

Executive Director

Oregon Economic Development Association



OEDA's network of economic development professionals across the state aim to protect and sustainable jobs from companies producing internationally traded goods and services. We support tools and policies that focus on bringing economic opportunity to our disadvantaged and distressed and historically under-employed communities throughout the state.

2021 Legislative Priorities

COVID Response Measures

- Continue to advocate for resources directed to local governments to support communities and businesses suffering from economic hardship.
- Adjust current programs to consider unforeseeable circumstances caused by pandemic or pandemic response, including Enterprise Zone employment thresholds.
- Incorporate economic development experts in state executive and legislative responses to pandemic and recovery.
- Extend meaningful relief and flexibility to impacted businesses related to commercial lease holders and business taxes.

Economic Development Programs & Incentives

- Propose enhancements to tools that can bring investment to Oregon and expand jobs in communities lacking long-term sustainable job opportunities.
- Preserve tools such as tax increment financing, strategic investment/Gainshare and other employer incentives that help broaden Oregon and local government tax base.
- Protect current enterprise zones and oppose measures that would mandate public contracting requirements on private projects.

Land and Infrastructure

- Expand capability for private and public entities to provide development-ready industrial sites. Ensure capitalization of and funding for the Regionally Significant Industrial Sites program, Brownfields Redevelopment Fund (BRF)
- Support efforts to reduce regulatory barriers for infrastructure and land development emerging from House Wetlands Workgroup.
- Advocate for create solutions to remedy brownfield sites and return to productive use.
- Support transportation investments that link population centers with job sites
- Support recapitalization of ODOT Immediate Opportunity Fund (IOF) program

Tax Climate for Traded-Sector Business Retention

- Consider ramifications of revenue-raising proposals which limit Oregon's position to competitively attract capital or retain current employer base.

Labor and Workforce Development

- Enhance the existing pool of Oregon's skilled workers, including on-the-job training and an access for workers to community colleges and higher education.
- Consider regulatory costs and challenges in potential employee benefit changes and wage & hour law.
- Support local government flexibility in providing building program services directly or through contractors.

State Financial Resources

- Secure appropriate adjustments to lottery revenue disbursements to counties
- Support funding of general fund allocation to Business Oregon for economic development staff and programs
- Protect Oregon's collaborative approach to community and economic development in Oregon by funding Regional Solutions (\$15 million).
- Advocate for recapitalization of Brownfields Redevelopment Fund)
- Identify and secure resources for regionally delivered, entrepreneurial ecosystem building with an emphasis on BIPOC and rural communities
- Bonding for Infrastructure
- Address critical public works and infrastructure through recapitalizing the Special Public Works Fund

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

- Continue coalition work to advocate funding and skilled administration of programs supporting innovation, startup and new business creation across the state.
- Continue coalition work to support legislative efforts aimed at enhancement of environmental factors supporting innovation incl. access to capital.



Temporary authorization for local governments to waive E-Zone eligibility thresholds

- Enterprise Zones are critical tool in bringing long-term, sustainable jobs to distressed communities in urban and rural areas.
- E-Zones allow local governments to offer 1-5 year property tax abatements to companies who invest in or expand within the designated area. Eligibility for the property tax abatement includes certain thresholds for hiring and retaining new workers.
- The pandemic, related Executive orders and restrictions have caused unforeseeable challenges for several employers receiving these E-Zone abatements.
- Emergency action by the legislature is critical to allow local governments the ability to waive employment thresholds for those companies who drop below the employment thresholds to maintain existing abatements and avoid further threats to the workforce, their businesses and their operations.
- The Legislature should provide temporary authority to local governments to suspend Enterprise Zone employment requirements where employers can demonstrate to the zone sponsor that workforce curtailments are a result of the public health crisis and related economic impacts.

The Oregon Economic Development Association is a statewide non-profit organization working to support economic development professionals who are on Oregon's front line in diversifying and expanding Oregon's economy.