

Date: March 22, 2021

To: Chair and Members of the House Committee on Revenue
From: Scott Bruun, OBI
RE: OBI Testimony in Support of HB 3302

Chair Nathanson and Members of the Revenue Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Scott Bruun, and I am Director of Tax and Fiscal Policy for Oregon Business and Industry. OBI is a member-led business trade association. We have 1,600 members that employ more than 330,000 Oregonians. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We support HB 3302.

As already noted, HB 3302 would provide moderate tax credit incentives to encourage individuals and business tax filers to financially support qualified workforce training organizations.

The need for and the benefits of workforce training and education have long been understood. Clearly, however, the times we are in now make the need for accessible work force training all the more important. At the peak of the economic storm caused by COVID last year, more than 300,000 Oregonians were out of work. And while many of those jobs have now been recovered, unemployment in Oregon still remains stubbornly high at 6.1%. The Oregonian newspaper wrote last week that "While the jobless rate has fallen for 10 straight months, the rate of improvement has slowed to a crawl over the past three months."

COVID has changed our lives of course, and it's changed the way we work. Even with a return to "normalcy," many of the jobs lost to COVID will simply not be coming back.

Then there is the larger macro environment, COVID notwithstanding. We overuse the phrase to a point where it may sound cliché, but it's true nonetheless: we live and we work in a global economy. Technology, job-types and job-skills are changing constantly, and in fact need to change constantly. If we are not keeping up, if we are not learning and growing, then we are falling behind.

The issues around COVID job loss and Oregon's place in the global economy are bigger than one bill, of course. But HB 3302 is a very important piece in the larger puzzle. A tax credit incentive designed to support and enhance job training and career learning is good for Oregon workers and their families and their communities. It's also very good, and in fact necessary, for Oregon businesses which must compete in every corner of the globe and absolutely depend on a well-trained Oregon workforce.

For all these reasons, OBI encourages you to support passage of HB 3302. Thank you.

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