



Workforce and Talent Development Board

April 2, 2021

**The Honorable Senator Michael Dembrow
Members of the Senate Education Committee**

Re: SB 623 and the Committee on Continuous Improvement of the Workforce and Talent Development Board

We are writing to you today in support of the Workforce and Talent Development Board (WTDB) as a key resource and national leader on the future of work including the skills required to propel Oregon businesses forward and sustain individual and community prosperity.

The WTDB continues to grow its credibility as an acknowledged leader in advising the Governor and legislature on the interconnection and alignment of education, training, and workforce development for the greater good. In fulfilling this role, we published and/or funded numerous reports during 2020 including these:

- [Effects of Social Distancing on Oregon's Leisure and Hospitality Workers](#)
- [Essential Employability Skills— Needed Now More Than Ever](#)
- [Issue Brief: The Human Development Side of Economic Recovery in Oregon](#)
- [Oregon Talent Assessment](#)
- [Stimulating Apprenticeship in Oregon Now and For the Future](#)
- [Summary of Workforce Conversations with Business, Education, Workforce, Government Nonprofit, and Thought Leaders during the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
- [Talent Development for Artificial Intelligence in a Post-Pandemic World](#)

As you know, the WTDB and its members represent an important mix of key partners and leaders from around the state who really care about this work and the people we serve including business, labor, community-based organizations, the Oregon legislature, local government, and state agencies. Because of this diverse membership, we are uniquely positioned as one of Oregon's workforce and talent development thought leaders.

The WTDB's 2020-2021 Strategic Plan provides a transformational foundation for increased innovation and effectiveness that is already translating into better results for Oregon, particularly those from rural Oregon, low-income communities and communities of color. The plan calls out a vision of equitable prosperity for all Oregonians and our mission is to advance Oregon through meaningful work, training, and education by empowering people and employers.

Under Section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the WTDB is also required to assist the Governor in the development and continuous improvement of the



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workforce development system. As such, the WTDB Continuous Improvement Committee was established in 2018. The committee attempted to move things forward, but met with varying degrees of participation, engagement and transparency from partners. Although the committee stopped meeting in 2019, and did not reconvene during the pandemic, the board leadership continued to strategize on ways to drive the continuous improvement of the workforce and talent development system in Oregon.

The pandemic has been very challenging for all of us including for numerous components of and programs within the workforce systems of most all of the states around the country including Oregon's. COVID has certainly revealed numerous issues and opportunities for improvement.

The economic recovery that we seem to be moving into finally, provides a significant opportunity to restart the committee in collaboration with partners at both the state agency level and local community level who are now, more than ever, ready to move our collective system forward. It is time to roll up our sleeves and get busy working better together with a special emphasis on our underserved and underrepresented communities that have been most harshly impacted.

As Chair and Vice Chair of the WTDB, our plan is to restart the WTDB Committee on Continuous Improvement as soon as possible with the mix of partners and stakeholders that has been agreed to by leadership from our board, relevant state agencies and partners, and the local workforce development boards.

Although we have shifted to a successful task force only model to conduct our business, we have determined that because of a renewed focus, energy and strong willingness to come together to evaluate and improve the workforce system in Oregon, we will formalize this critical work and the Committee on Continuous Improvement by including it in our by-laws as a required, standing committee of the board.

We appreciate all the hard work each and every one of you in the legislature has done over the past year and then some; And, as we now move into the second quarter of 2021, we look forward to guiding, leading and holding the Workforce System in Oregon accountable to continuously improve and drive results in order to best serve our customers and the citizens of Oregon.

And, Senator Dembrow, we want to personally thank you for your continued service to Oregonians and for the outstanding leadership you provide for the Workforce and Talent Development Board!

Sincerely,

Ken Madden, Chair
Workforce and Talent Development Board
Owner, Madden Industrial Craftsmen

Anne Mersereau, Vice Chair
Workforce and Talent Development Board
Vice President, HR, Diversity & Inclusion, PGE