

February 25, 2021

The Honorable Senator Chuck Riley, Chair
The Honorable Senator Bill Hansell, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Senator Kayse Jama
The Honorable Senator Bill Kennemer
The Honorable Senator Kate Lieber
Senate Committee on Labor and Business

Letter of Support for Senate Bill 17

Dear Chair Riley and Members of the Committee,

As a member of the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board, I fully support Senate Bill 17, which would allow Oregon's occupational licensing boards the ability to grant provisional licensure to candidates who are licensed in other states to work in the Border Region while they work toward their full Oregon licensure.

Since the Legislature created the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board in 2017, the Border Board has been working with the local community to identify barriers that inhibit economic development in the Border Region and measures that would address those barriers.

One issue that has been repeatedly raised with the Border Board by employers and employees alike across many business sectors is how Oregon's licensure process fosters an unfortunate shortage of qualified workers. Employers have difficulty finding qualified, that is licensed, workers. Workers report their interest in working in the border region, in part because of Oregon's higher wages. However, many workers, especially those new to the rapidly growing Boise, ID metropolitan region can gain their Idaho license through reciprocity agreements with other states or through the, at least perceived, faster licensure processes in Idaho. Once working in Idaho, workers feel they cannot afford to give up a position or scarce family time to prepare for obtaining an Oregon license.

SB 17 would allow Oregon's various occupational licensing boards the ability to grant provisional licensure to candidates licensed in other states to work in the Border Region while they work towards their full Oregon licensure. This would give qualified, experienced workers the opportunity to develop their careers in the Border Region.

SB 17 would not compromise the high standards for the quality of Oregon's workforce. Licensing boards would retain their individual control of the terms for a provisional license. Importantly, licensing boards would be given permission to grant provisional licenses after evaluating the credentials of candidates; the granting of provisional licenses is not be mandatory under SB 17. Also, applicants must be working toward their full Oregon license during the two year limit of their provisional status. SB 17 would facilitate the development of a highly qualified, experienced professional workforce in the Border Region.

SB 17 is a critical part of the Border Board's work toward improving the economic status and quality of life in the Border Region. As a Border Board member, I look forward to working with Oregon's licensing boards, employers and prospective workers in making SB 17 a success for the Border Region, and I respectfully request your support of the bill.

Sincerely,
Stuart Reitz
Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board