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January 30, 2025

Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for SB 605

Chair Taylor, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee:

Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) urges your support of SB 605, Ending Credit Reporting on Medical Debt. This critical legislation will address the harmful impact of medical debt on Oregonians and advance financial and health equity across the state.

At MESO, our mission is to elevate under-resourced and excluded entrepreneurs to build resilience, equity, and thriving communities through access to capital, tailored business assistance, and education. MESO primarily serves emerging small business owners, many of whom are operating businesses less than two years old. These entrepreneurs rely on their personal credit to secure business financing, as traditional lenders often evaluate the owner's creditworthiness before approving loans.

Medical debt disproportionately affects the communities we serve—especially women, people of color, and immigrants—adding yet another barrier to financial stability and entrepreneurial growth. SB 605 offers a powerful step toward protecting small business owners and their families from the unjust credit harm caused by involuntary and often erroneous medical debt.

Medical debt is a unique and deeply inequitable financial burden. Unlike other debts, it is not accrued by choice; it arises from emergencies or essential care. Too often, even insured individuals are left with thousands of dollars in unpaid bills, which can harm their credit scores. This damage makes it harder for small business owners to access affordable credit, lease business spaces, and build their enterprises—ultimately stifling economic progress in their communities.

SB 605 provides essential protections for Oregonians by:

- Removing existing medical debt from credit reports.
- Prohibiting medical debt reporting to credit agencies for purposes such as employment or tenant screening.
- Including targeted healthcare credit cards, like CareCredit, in the reporting ban.

Our clients, the traditionally underserved small business owners of Oregon, deserve the opportunity to thrive without being unfairly penalized for medical emergencies. By passing SB 605, we can ensure that medical debt no longer undermines their ability to access affordable credit or achieve financial security.



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Thank you for your service to Oregon communities and for considering this vital legislation. We urge you to support SB 605 and provide Oregonians with the consumer protections they need to build healthier and more equitable futures.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Veaudry Casaus

Education Program Manager, MESO