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January 28, 2025

House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for SB 569

Dear Chairwoman Taylor and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business:

MESO urges your support for SB 569

Dear Chairwoman Taylor and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business,

I am honored to provide testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 569, a critical piece of legislation that seeks to allocate funds to nonprofit organizations with the purpose of increasing the number of COBID-certified small businesses in Oregon. I would like to express my gratitude to Senator Aaron Woods for serving as the chief sponsor of this bill, and I commend his dedication to fostering equity and resilience in our local economies.

As the Executive Director of MESO (Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon), I am privileged to lead an organization that works tirelessly to elevate under-resourced and excluded entrepreneurs by providing access to capital, tailored business assistance, and education. MESO holds regular classes to guide our clients through the COBID certification process as emerging, female-owned, or minority businesses. This certification is a vital tool for small business owners, creating pathways to opportunities that were previously out of reach, such as state contracting and public procurement.

Senate Bill 569 represents a much-needed investment in small business ecosystems across Oregon. The funding allocated by this bill will not only allow MESO to expand our outreach and assist more entrepreneurs in obtaining COBID certification but also help us provide essential training on how to maximize the benefits of being certified. Our ongoing education programs are designed to equip certified businesses with the skills and strategies needed to navigate the complexities of using their certification to build sustainable and thriving enterprises.

The traditionally underserved small business owners MESO serves—many of whom are women, people of color, and immigrants—play a critical role in local, state, and national economies. These entrepreneurs are drivers of innovation, job creation, and community development, yet they often face disproportionate barriers to success. Senate Bill 569 addresses these inequities by empowering nonprofits like MESO to provide the tools and support our clients need to thrive.



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The positive ripple effects of this bill will be felt far and wide. By increasing the number of COVID-certified businesses and equipping them to leverage their certifications effectively, we are fostering economic participation, diversity, and equity in Oregon's workforce.

I strongly urge you to support Senate Bill 569. Together, we can create a more inclusive and resilient economy where every entrepreneur has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cobi Lewis

Executive Director, MESO