



City Of Heppner

Gateway to the Blues

111 N. Main Street – P.O. Box 756

Heppner, Oregon 97836-0756

541-676-9618 – manager@cityofheppner.org

March 7, 2025

The House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 3104

Dear Representatives:

My name is John Doherty, and I am the City Manager for the City of Heppner. I am writing regarding the proposed HB 3104.

While we would be supportive of assistance to rural communities for economic development, the Bill as written, we oppose. We would be in support of a bill with recommended revisions.

The Bill, as written, defines “Rural,” as *located entirely outside the acknowledged Portland Metropolitan Area Regional Urban Growth Boundary and the acknowledged urban growth boundaries of all cities with populations of 30,000 or more.*

The cities with the real need for this economic development are cities with populations of 5,000 or less. Cities with populations between 5,000 – 30,000 often have either staffs capable of pursuing development or the funds availability to hire grant writers, consultants, etc. Cities such as Hermiston, Pendleton, Klamath Falls, Ontario, and LaGrande have staffing and/or funding sufficient to dedicate resources towards development.

The City of Heppner, with a population of ~1,200, has a total staff of 7 individuals. As City Manager, I am responsible for the budget, investments, code enforcement, grant writing, lobbying, economic development, contract negotiation, and much more. I have to “wear many hats.” I apply for grants when both feasible and I have the time available to devote to the project. We have a need for assistance in attracting housing developers and new business to our community. We do not have the funds to hire grant writers for every grant that we qualify for, and I do not have the time available to research all grants. There are many small cities with staffs smaller than my own.

It is the smaller cities that are in greatest need. It is the cities such as Heppner, Lexington, Jordan Valley, Bonanza, Maupin, Jewell, Powers, and Burns around the state that truly need this assistance. I am worried that supporting this bill as written would continue to see the larger “rural,” cities continue to receive the assistance as they may have individuals with the time to even devote to working with the entity which would be chosen to manage funds.

Regarding the proposed funding in this Bill, we would ask for 75% of the funds devoted to uses specified in section 2, with 25% for staffing. An even 50-50 split creates high salary individuals with little direction to actually help these rural communities. The bulk of the funds need to go to the cities.

THE CITY OF HEPPNER

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We ask you to please vote No on HB 3104, as proposed, or to suggest revisions before ongoing discussion.

The City of Heppner supports your efforts on this matter. I would be happy to discuss the needs of our city and the overall needs within the state.

Sincerely,

John Doherty
City Manager