



March 12, 2025

Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 5024

Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Suzanne Veaudry Casaus, and I serve as the Education Program Manager at MESO (Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon). I am writing in strong support of HB 5024, which provides critical funding for the Small Business and Technical Assistance Program administered by Business Oregon.

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 small business owners from historically marginalized backgrounds, including BIPOC, women, and immigrant entrepreneurs. Many of our clients operate businesses that are less than two years old and face significant barriers to securing funding, navigating regulatory requirements, and scaling their businesses.

The Small Business and Technical Assistance Program has been instrumental in MESO's ability to provide high-quality, culturally competent, and linguistically appropriate business education and coaching. Thanks to funding from Business Oregon, MESO has been able to:

- Provide over 3,500 hours of technical assistance in the past year.
- Offer 149 classes that reached 2,380 attendees, taught by 52 specialized instructors from the community.
- Cover critical topics such as AI, COBID certification, business taxes, credit and debt, intellectual property, pricing and inventory management, Canva, digital media, and more.
- Deliver bilingual education, ensuring that Oregon's Spanish-speaking entrepreneurs have equal access to essential business knowledge.



Why HB 5024 Matters for Oregon's Small Businesses

The success of small businesses depends not just on access to capital but on education, mentorship, and practical tools that help entrepreneurs navigate challenges and build sustainable, thriving businesses. MESO's classes use tried-and-true adult education techniques and the latest virtual class delivery methods to meet business owners where they are, providing practical and actionable knowledge.

Additionally, Business Oregon has fostered a strong network of Technical Assistance providers who collaborate to improve organizational capacity and the overall effectiveness of our programs. This statewide ecosystem of support ensures that small business owners—no matter their background or location—have access to tailored, high-quality assistance that meets their unique needs.

The Impact of Business Education on Small Business Success

When small business owners receive targeted education and one-on-one coaching, they are more likely to:

- Develop strong financial management skills, reducing debt and increasing profitability.
- Understand and navigate state and federal business regulations, ensuring compliance.
- Build effective marketing and digital strategies, expanding their customer base.
- Scale their businesses and create local jobs, strengthening Oregon's economy.

At MESO, we see firsthand how technical assistance transforms small businesses and lives. The funding provided by HB 5024 will ensure that under-resourced entrepreneurs continue to receive the education and coaching they need to succeed.

I strongly urge your support of HB 5024 to ensure that Oregon's small business owners have the resources, guidance, and network they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and commitment to supporting Oregon's entrepreneurs and small business ecosystem.

Sincerely,
Suzanne Veaudry Casaus
Education Program Manager
MESO (Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon)
Portland, Oregon