

March 17, 2025

Testimony of Lara Damon, Executive Director

In support of Business Oregon's budget and partner presentation (HB 5024)

Re: \$4.8 million - Business Technical Assistance Program

Dear Co-Chairs Woods, Gomberg and members of the subcommittee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony in support of House Bill 5024.

This letter is in support of Business Oregon's Technical Assistance for Underrepresented Businesses Program (TAP). We advocate for the continued funding of this program and are reassured to see \$4.8 million for this program directed to Business Oregon in the Governor's Request Budget. These funds are critical in reaching historically underrepresented and underserved small businesses.

As a business development support provider that provides services to historically marginalized entrepreneurs throughout the state of Oregon, I believe economic justice and equity is essential for the future prosperity of our state. Livelihood NW is a technical assistance provider whose mission is to foster business sustainability and growth for entrepreneurs to build thriving local communities. Livelihood NW provides high-quality business development support services to promote lifelong learning, empowerment, and positive economic impact.

As a grantee of the TAP program, over the past 17-months (bi-annum 2023-2025), we have provided in-depth one-on-one consulting, peer-to-peer learning, workshops, training, and access to a network of referrals and resources to support more than 140 entrepreneurs throughout Oregon with the knowledge, tools, and resources to build and grow their businesses, while creating wealth for themselves, their employees, and their community.

Of the **140 entrepreneurs** their collective representation includes: **83% are economically disadvantaged, 74% women-owned, 60% BIPOC-owned, 30% located in rural communities.** Livelihood NW has provided **more than 1200 hours of technical assistance and advising** to more than **24 new businesses** and over **110 established businesses** who continue to **grow jobs and wealth** throughout the State, region, and nation.

The TA program's unique approach in state funded small business support relies on working with community embedded organizations to provide culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate, and geographically aligned resources to small businesses.

As you consider the Business Oregon budget, we strongly urge you to maintain, and if possible increase, funding for the Business Technical Assistance Program. This vital initiative gives Oregonians from economically distressed communities the opportunity to maximize their economic potential and add to the vibrancy of Oregon's economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lara Damon

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