



March 17, 2025

Senator Aaron Woods, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
900 Court St. NE Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of RAIN Catalysts, an entrepreneurship service organization focused on enabling inclusive economic growth across rural Oregon, I write in strong support of Business Oregon. Our state's economic development enterprise serves a critical role in enhancing the quality of life for all Oregonians. In rural areas, opportunities to launch and scale homegrown companies are crucial for maintaining economic vitality. Business Oregon plays a central role in supporting and funding organizations that bring these opportunities to communities across the state.

Two programs—the Rural Opportunity Initiative (ROI) and the Innovation Hubs program—are especially important to the populations that RAIN Catalysts serves. ROI offers a unique resource to rural-serving organizations by providing funding, connections to peers, and technical assistance that helps nonprofits build capacity. As a result of our participation in ROI, RAIN Catalysts has:

- Provided training for 40+ entrepreneurs on bringing new customers to rural brick-and-mortar businesses;
- Catalogued entrepreneurship and business resources across rural communities in Linn, Lane, Benton, and Grant Counties; and
- Created street fairs to build a customer base and new sales opportunities for vendors in Eastern Oregon.

ROI demonstrates the capacity for rural communities to build vibrant local economies and connect to state, regional, national, and international markets.

The Innovation Hubs offer vital connections to opportunities to launch companies, find good jobs, grow regional economies, and create impact by turning ideas into products and businesses. Oregon has immense capacity to compete globally across a number of sectors that are enhanced through the work of the Innovation Hubs. Augmenting networks by creating well-funded hubs managed by expert conveners will accelerate discoveries, commercialization, and the growth of an innovation-based economy.

We strongly encourage full funding for Business Oregon and for the Rural Opportunity Initiative and Innovation Hubs programs. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Jagoda Brunette".

Rachel Jagoda Brunette
Chief Executive Officer, RAIN Catalysts
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