

Submitter: Grace Donovan  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Frontier Innovation Hub  
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Transportation and Economic Development  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5024

Dear Chair Sanchez, Chair Lieber, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for continued and increased funding for the Oregon Business Development Department and Regional Innovation Hubs which empower and uplift entrepreneurs across our state. The Rural Engagement and Vitality Center oversees the Oregon Frontier Innovation Hub, serving ten Eastern Oregon counties and supporting entrepreneurs building innovative and tech-enabled businesses in rural and frontier Oregon communities.

Rural entrepreneurs face unique challenges, including limited access to capital, workforce shortages, and infrastructure barriers that pose important barriers to business growth. Business Oregon provides essential support through grants, loan programs, and technical assistance. These programs not only help small businesses start and scale, but also ensure that rural communities remain vibrant through job creation, innovation, and attracting investment and talent to their communities.

Thanks to funding from Business Oregon, the Oregon Frontier Innovation Hub has connected rural entrepreneurs with tailored support, helped expand operations, and access mentorship and networking opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach. Business Oregon also ensures entrepreneurs across the state have access to capital, funding, technical assistance, and support. By supporting industries such as agriculture, sustainable manufacturing, and technology startups, Business Oregon ensures that rural Oregon is not left behind in economic growth and innovation.

Investing in Oregon's business development programs is an investment in our state's economic resilience which is particularly urgent in rural communities whose economic recovery has lagged behind metropolitan centers. I urge the legislature to prioritize funding for these initiatives so that rural entrepreneurs have the support they need to thrive, innovate, and expand, creating jobs in their communities. I appreciate your leadership and commitment to economic development across the state and ask for your support in ensuring that all Oregon businesses, regardless of location, have the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Grace Donovan  
Executive Director  
Rural Engagement and Vitality Center