

Submitter: Devon Lawson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4084

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Devon Lawson. I am testifying today in strong opposition to HB 4084.

While this bill is presented as "economic development," a close reading of the text reveals it to be something else entirely. It is a centralization of executive power that authorizes subsidizing automation at the expense of Oregon's workforce.

I urge you to vote No for three specific reasons:

Section 1 establishes a "Joint Permitting Council" appointed entirely by the Governor, with no legislative confirmation. Section 2 grants this Council the power to "fast-track" projects exceeding \$100 million. This is executive overreach. It allows the Governor's appointees to bypass the statutory authority of independent agencies. It is a "Portland knows best" mandate that overrides local planning commissions. Additionally, "streamlining" is a euphemism for skipping steps. This council is designed to force approvals that might otherwise fail under rigorous DEQ or Water Resources Department review.

Current Enterprise Zone law requires businesses to meet employment targets to get their tax break. Section 10, Subsection (2)(a) amends this to allow "flexible hiring timelines" and "alternative performance criteria" if a firm has a "clear plan." This is a betrayal. A "clear plan" is not a job. This language allows corporations to lay off workers or delay hiring while still keeping their tax exemption. It turns a contract into a suggestion.

In Section 14, the bill defines "productivity" as "dividing physical units... by the number of labor hours." Under this definition, a company that fires 100 workers and replaces them with a machine increases its productivity and qualifies for state money. Why should the Oregon taxpayer subsidize the elimination of Oregon jobs?

We are facing a budget deficit. We are asking our schools and community colleges to do more with less. Now is not the time to create a new, appointed bureaucracy dedicated to handing out tax breaks to companies that, by the bill's own definitions, don't even have to hire our constituents to keep the money.

This bill is a bad deal for taxpayers, workers, and local democracy. I urge you to vote No.

Thank you