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RIDECONNECTION.ORG

Co-Chair Burdick, Co-Chair Bailey, Co-Chair Berger, Members of the Joint Committee on Tax Credits, Good Morning.

I am here today on behalf of each of your constituents to talk to you about the crucial funding Ride Connection and many transit providers throughout the state receive from the Business Energy Tax Credit's conservation program. I urge you, actually I am here to plead with you, to continue this funding. BETC funding is critical for many of your constituents, for their mobility and independence. Without BETC funds, we, and all the other agencies that receive BETC funding, will have to cut services! If it were not for BETC funding, we would have been unable to provide at least 90,000 trips this past year! This means that individuals cannot live an independent life, be consumers in their communities by purchasing goods from their local stores, get to medical appointments, find and retain employment, and in some cases will have to move to expensive assisted living facilities that ends up costing the state a lot more money than what we are seeking to help them stay independent consumers and citizens.

Independence

Georgia lost her driver's license a year ago due to an auto accident and has no family available to take her places. Because of access to transportation she can maintain her independence by getting to her medical appointments and the more immediate needs like grocery shopping. Because of transportation services she maintains a quality of life and she remains active in her community. She is very older adult in every community.

Freedom

Ride Connection is a 25 year old nonprofit organization that provides transportation options for older adults, people with disabilities, rural residents, and low income job seekers and wage earners in Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties. We provide these services through a network of service partners. Last year we provided over 393,000 rides and assisted another 2,000 individuals on how to safely and independently utilize public transit.

Dignity

Ride Connection has utilized BETC funding to leverage and match \$2.3 million dollars in federal and non federal funding. These funds, like the other funds that other transit agencies have leveraged, are used to provide essential transportation services to many of your constituents.

Many rural providers will also be affected. For example in the city of Canby, if BETC funding is to be eliminated, they will lose 25% of their operating budget. This means they will eliminate their fixed route service and only provide commuter services in the morning and evening hours and provide the bare minimum services to older adults and people with disabilities.

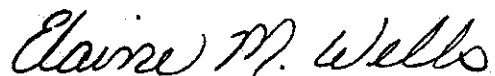
The economic ramifications would also be great if BETC is not continued at its current level. Ride Connection employs 43 individuals with 34 at a



livable wage level (figured at twice the state's minimum wage). In addition over 43,000 trips or 11% of our service are for individuals to access work and work related activities. Without BETC funding the cuts and economic impact would be significant.

I urge you to allow transit services to continue to receive funding through BETC until a sustainable funding source for transit is secured.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elaine M. Wells".

Elaine Wells, Executive Director
Ride Connection, Inc.