



Testimony in Support of HB 4040
Submitted by: Northwest Credit Union Association
February 6, 2012

Good morning Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee, my name is Jean Wheat-Palm and I am the President of Valley Credit Union in Salem and Chair of the Northwest Credit Union Association's Governmental Affairs Committee. I am here representing Oregon's 85 state and federally chartered credit unions.

Background on Oregon's Credit Unions

In this time of a changing financial services industry, it is important to truly understand how credit unions are unique and different and why we remain extremely popular financial alternative for 93 million Americans. Credit unions are not-for-profit financial cooperatives, democratically controlled by our members and operated for the purpose of promoting thrift, credit at competitive rate and providing financial services to our members. Many credit unions also provide services intended to support community development.

Over 38 percent of Oregonians are member-owners of their credit unions, and you will find them in every walk of life – from cattle ranchers in Central Oregon, to mill workers in the Willamette Valley, to fishermen on the Oregon Coast, to high-tech workers around the state. With more than 1.4 million members, Oregon credit unions strive to preserve a legislative climate that recognizes their unique structure and mission.

HB4040

With our background in local communities in Oregon, credit Unions have first-hand experience in deploying capital locally. We continue to see how our members are affected by the local economy. We believe the Oregon Investment Act can build on the public-private partnerships that are currently working and improve them by adding leverage from the private sector so we can expand and diversify efforts to grow and improve all our communities.

We believe in coordinating these efforts so that the financial community can better address capital gaps in types of investment and across sectors. This will help financial institutions meet the needs of their communities and will also be beneficial for institutions looking to engage in such partnerships (due to increased leverage and coordination).

The Oregon Investment Act builds on that success and adds some sanity to the existing economic development infrastructure (coordination, leverage, flexibility). We look forward to participating on the Oregon Growth Board and we urge your support of HB 4040.

For more information, contact: Pam Leavitt, pleavitt@nwcua.org.