

April 10, 2013

Public Testimony supporting HB 3038
House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Good morning Chair Dembrow and committee members. My name is Karen Cook, Training Coordinator at A.R.E. Manufacturing, Inc. located in Newberg, Oregon. Our President, Alvin Elbert, is a member of the Board of Directors of Job Growers Incorporated, the Workforce Investment Board for Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties. I am excited to be here representing the many businesses that benefit from funding for Workforce Development. For A.R.E. Manufacturing, Inc., Employer Workforce Training and Back to Work Oregon are critical components to our ability to develop our new and existing employees into family wage earners with careers in manufacturing. Certified Work Ready Communities are our invitation to the world that Oregon is open and ready for business.

A.R.E. Manufacturing, Inc. is a contract precision CNC machine shop. Our internal On the Job Training Program is perfectly suited for new and transitioning workers that have basic skills in physical science and applied mathematics. Back to Work Oregon is the financial bridge from untapped “potential” to actual hands-on experience with the opportunity to build a career. It reduces the impact of cyclical demands on our cash flow allowing improved long term planning. On the Job Training allows us to utilize our slower production periods to train and prepare our employees to meet the challenges of new business and high demand periods.

Participation in the Mid-Willamette High Performance Consortium (MWHPC) sponsored by Job Growers Incorporated is invaluable. For example: 3-D Plastics in Newberg, Oregon hosted a consortium sponsored Setup Reduction Workshop facilitated by Gary Conner, well known Lean Manufacturing champion and author. 3-D Plastics reported more than a 50% reduction in setup time which translates not only into a higher profit margin on the specific jobs evaluated but provides additional growth opportunities now that smaller quantity jobs can also be profitable. Participating employees from GK Machine (Donald, OR), Kettle Foods (Salem, OR), and A.R.E. Manufacturing (Newberg, OR) brought this experience and knowledge back to their respective companies with a renewed spring in their step and spark in their eye.

Today’s business environment requires flexibility and adaptability. A skilled, trained workforce provides that flexibility and adaptability. Employer Workforce Training, Certified Work Ready Communities, and Back to Work Programs are cost-effective ways for workers and employers to explore skill matches and opportunities. Workers who find that *good* match are able to make informed decisions about where and how to invest their hard earned dollars in higher education – often with employer tuition support. Employers are able to leverage skilled, trained employees into new business opportunities and growth.