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*The leader in advocating  
for a healthy economic environment*

February 13, 2013

Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Roblan and Committee Members:

**RE: SB 19, Relating to Defining "Rural Area" in the State Strategic Investment Program (SIP)**

On behalf of the Westside Economic Alliance (WEA), please accept this testimony opposing SB 19, aimed at limiting application of the Rural Strategic Investment Program (SIP). Limiting the use of the Rural SIP program erodes Oregon's competitiveness in economic development at a time when job creation and economic growth are critical priorities for our state.

SB 19 would limit the use of the SIP only to areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) at the time an application for a Rural SIP is filed. If passed, this bill would prevent the application of the Rural SIP to areas added to the UGB for industrial use since 2002. This would impact over one thousand acres of prime industrial land in Washington County.

The Rural SIP program's \$25M investment threshold provides a great opportunity for mid-size tech firms, major high tech suppliers and spin-off companies to take advantage of local property tax abatements on equipment and other capital investments. Thus, it is a valuable local economic development tool for our state.

Restricting the use of this tool by limiting its application is harmful to the region and state of Oregon. It is particularly troublesome in light of the fact that the industrial land located in Washington County serves as part of a regional and statewide employment center which provides jobs to thousands of employees living across the region. Recent statistics show that over 70% of workers employed in Hillsboro live and commute from throughout the Portland Metropolitan Area.

Therefore, limiting the use of the Rural SIP negatively impacts the economic health and competitiveness of not only Hillsboro and Washington County, but also the Portland Metro Region and the State of Oregon.



In today's competitive economic climate, where Oregon must compete with areas throughout the U.S. and around the world, restricting our tools for job creation and economic development is counterproductive at best, and simply not a wise policy for our state to pursue.

It is for these reasons, and for the economic health of Oregon's future, that the WEA strongly opposes SB 19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norm Eder".

Norm Eder  
President and Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pamela H. Treece".

Pamela Treece  
Executive Director