

## **House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Efficiency**

February 26, 2013

HB 2370 Public Hearing

Remarks from Celeste Meiffren, Consumer and Taxpayer Advocate, OSPIRG

Chair Holvey, members of the committee, for the record my name is Celeste Meiffren and I am the Consumer and Taxpayer Advocate with OSPIRG. OSPIRG is a citizen funded non-partisan non-profit, working on behalf of the public interest to protect consumers and promote good government.

I am here today in support of House Bill 2370.

The ability of the public to see how their government uses the public purse is fundamental to democracy. Transparency in government spending checks corruption, bolsters public confidence in government and promotes greater effectiveness and fiscal responsibility.

In 2011 and 2012, through a bipartisan effort, the Oregon State Legislature adopted new measures intended to shine the spotlight of transparency on eighteen economic development tax expenditure programs, estimated to cost Oregon taxpayers over \$665 million in the 2013-2015 biennium. These expenditures are largely income tax credits and property tax abatements to companies in exchange for pledges to create new jobs or provide other kinds of public value.

The purpose of this law is to allow taxpayers **and lawmakers** to see the recipients of economic development tax expenditures, what economic output is being required in exchange for public dollars, and proof that recipients are fulfilling their deliverables.

**This is all in an effort to make sure that the public and lawmakers can adequately evaluate the effectiveness of these tax expenditures.**

**House Bill 2370, would simply add additional information to the Oregon Transparency website in order to give the public a more complete picture of economic development tax expenditures' cost and effectiveness.**

OSPIRG supports HB 2370 and will support every effort in the future that ensures that these tax expenditures are transparent and accountable to the people of Oregon.