



BETSY CLOSE
OREGON STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 8

Senate Business & Transportation Committee

February 11, 2014

Testimony on SB 1547 : Youth Employment Act

Thank you Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Starr, and members of the committee, for this opportunity to present the 2014 “Youth Employment Act” to you today. Increasingly our young people, who are seeking to enter the workforce, are facing obstacles to getting hired. Companies have become more and more specific in the skills they want an applicant to have. It is difficult to gain skills and a first job means everything for someone aged 14-19.

When I saw what Linn County has been doing for years to help young workers gain skills on their first job, I was very encouraged that we in the government together with businesses can help our youth receive the crucial on-the-job skills they need to succeed in their careers. It is called a “Youth-Wage Agreement”.

Senate Bill 154 would extend this program state wide. The age level is specified at 14-19. The small business employer must have 35 or fewer employees. An employment youth wage agreement is made between the county and the employer that specifies that the county will pay \$2/hour of the wage up to the maximum of \$1000 per youth, for a period not exceeding 6 months. Counties would apply for these grants through the Oregon Business Development Department. The youth is given critical job opportunities and the overall productivity of the county is improved. It is a win-win.

I congratulate Linn County for this very innovative alliance with local businesses. Commissioner Roger Nyquist is here today to explain it to you further.

Thank you.