



Oregon Bioscience Association

February 25, 2015

House Higher Education, Innovation, and Workforce Development Committee
c/o Representative Tobias Read, Chair
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 2728

The Oregon Bioscience Association (Oregon Bio) believes that the proposed Oregon Talent Council would provide a unique financial bridge between emerging industry workforce needs and Oregon's most innovative industry. Bioscience ranks as both a high wage industry and one that leverages one of the broadest spectrums of workers.

From PhD's to technicians trained at one of Oregon's outstanding community colleges, the workforce needs of the Bioscience workforce spans the entire range of skill levels and qualifications. In addition, aspiring bioscience workers must also be fluent in an array of regulatory, quality, safety and audit procedures. Accommodating the accelerated pace of the innovation economy requires the re-engineering of both educational and training systems.

The sad truth is that the education system has been slow to adapt to changing market conditions. Twenty five years ago, over 70% of the PhD graduates from life sciences programs went on to university teaching positions; today, that percentage has dropped below 18%. Most post doctoral programs have not adapted their curriculum to accommodate this new reality, despite the fact that the vast majority of graduates will never pursue teaching careers. Worse yet, many graduate students discover too late that they lack either the industry experience or training necessary to prepare them for industry careers, thus leading to unnecessary "under employment" or stunted career growth.

Oregon Bio has long recognized that a well balanced workforce requires our organization to offer professional training—often to mid-career professionals—to support emerging needs. In the last seven years, Oregon Bio has trained over 12% (1,700) of the bioscience workforce within Oregon Bio's BioPro Professional Training program. Through the Oregon Talent Council, and working in conjunction with industry-specific advisory boards, the state can leverage professional training, incubation facilities, internships and industry educational collaborations to address the highly fluid requirements of today's most innovative industries.

In 2014, the Oregon legislature and Business Oregon initiated an innovative pilot program (the Biocatalyst program) to train dislocated workers for new careers in the bioscience industry. Though Business Oregon took the lead in managing this one-time appropriation, an entity like the Oregon Talent Council would be better suited to provide on-going assessments on emerging employer needs that, in turn, would allow the state to quickly shift resources as necessary and



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consistently measure the results. Ideally, the Oregon Talent Council could become an aggregation point for both consolidating and synthesizing industry requirements and spotting emerging market trends within rapidly changing industries.

In the case of the BioCatalyst program, these efforts are already helping shape new curriculum development ideas to address the urgent market need for data analysts and software experts familiar with genomic profiling, healthcare informatics analysis and other "big data" challenges. As Oregon continues to establish itself as a world-class medical research center, Oregon Bio members hope to partner with the Oregon Talent Council, universities, and signature research centers to augment their programs and provide strategic industry advice.

As the collective voice for the bioscience industry, Oregon Bio asks you to support House Bill 2728 and its goal to create a stable, nimble and effective government partner in meeting the needs of Oregon's constantly evolving workforce.

Thank you for your work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Dennis McNannay
Executive Director