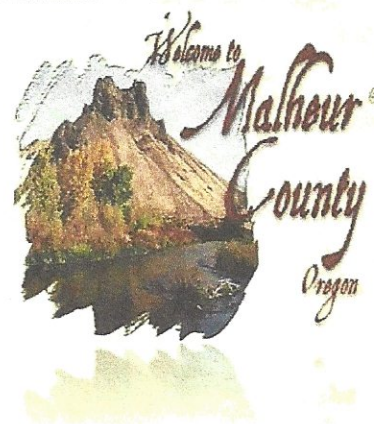


Industrial Lands: Riley J. Hill
Retain Local Business: Ken Hart
Career Technical Education: Dirk DeBoer
Expanded Ag/Traded Sector: Bill Johnson
Utilization of Natural Resources: Andrew Bentz



April 3, 2015

Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Subcommittee on Education

RE: HB 5024, The Community Agenda

Dear Co-chair Komp, Co-chair Monroe, and Committee Members,

Following months of backyard discussions starting in 2011, a dedicated group of local business leaders launched "Malheur County: Poverty to Prosperity" (MP2P). They were tired of hearing that Malheur County is "the poorest, most disadvantaged county in Oregon." Together they determined the county remains poverty stricken for five reasons:

1. We had not trained our workforce to current industry standards to take advantage of current available, living wage jobs.
2. We need a trained workforce to retain and/or expand local businesses.
3. To attract new industry we must have industrial lands and infrastructure.
4. We need to develop our abundant natural resources.
5. We need to develop agricultural leadership to expand our agricultural traded sector.

MP2P, a grassroots initiative was developed to lift this remote, rural Oregon county from severe economic distress. A community business leader was selected to chair each part of the plan and action committees were formed. Partners include business and industry, private sector participants, Malheur Education Service District (ESD), Malheur County Board of Commissioners, school districts, Treasure Valley Community College (TVCC), Oregon Department of Education, Malheur Juvenile Department, nonprofits, civic and social service organizations.

To establish a common agenda, working groups were organized to identify and prioritize high-impact levers for change. It was agreed the implementation of a Career Technical Education program was imperative to the success of MP2P. MP2P's CTE committee members have met weekly over the past two years. We work closely with local school districts, Malheur Education Service District, TVCC, community partners, and the Oregon Department of Education, which has provided funding through competitive grants (STEM, Youth Development Council, and Regional Achievement Collaborative) to develop programs that will build on the successes to date and strengthen outcome-based strategies for serving Opportunity and Priority Youth.

P.O Box 182
Ontario, OR 97914

MALHEUR COUNTY:
POVERTY TO PROSPERITY

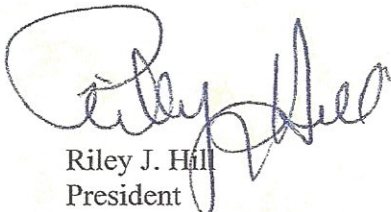
A grassroots plan to raise up Oregon's most poverty stricken county.

Serving at-risk and high-risk youth is a priority for MP2P partners. The CTE program was launched in school year 2013-14 with 20 high school students. In our second year we are now serving 94 students. MP2P's CTE program offers disadvantaged youth promising pathways to solid employment and earning capacity. Our program is intentionally designed to recruit Malheur County youth who may be identified as the "Bottom 20 of the Middle 40" in Oregon's 40-40-20 Plan (underserved students, i.e. low income/high poverty, Hispanic, English Language Learners).

We are proud of our success. However, it has been very, very difficult to organize this effort. Nobody here has done this before. At every civic governmental level we have struggled to understand the process and mechanisms for financial support. To date, we have been very dependent on creative funding from our schools, ESD and TVCC. The handful of outside grants we have received have been critical in helping us maintain our momentum.

We write to support the Governor's proposal of a Community Leverage Fund and a Center for Community Innovation. Our initiatives have not aligned well with Salem-driven priorities, and so we have been repeatedly overlooked by traditional funding streams. The Governor's proposal would enable local leadership, working with the Center for Community Innovation, to deliver solutions to the problems which we face here, in our community.

We are not alone. Throughout Oregon, rural communities struggle to empower local leadership with the resources they need to fix the problems in their communities. We hope we serve as an example of the exciting local initiatives that will result from funding of The Community Agenda.



Riley J. Hill
President
Malheur County: Poverty to Prosperity