



April 3, 2015

RE: HB 5024 Center for Community Innovation and Community Investment Fund

Dear co-chairs Monroe and Komp and members of the Ways and Means Education Sub-committee,

The Oregon Business Council Poverty Task Force is pleased to support the creation of a **Center for Community Innovation and a Community Leverage Fund**. Reducing poverty below 10% by 2020 is one of the Oregon Business Plan goals and the OBC Poverty Task Force has adopted short and long term initiatives to contribute to achieving that goal. For the 2015 legislative session we have adopted seven action items. Because we believe it is a very important element of our work to reduce poverty, one of the seven items we are advocating for is creating a way to meet the needs of communities where there is a concentration of poverty.

According to the U.S. Census, more than 25% of people in Oregon live in high poverty areas. This is troubling as the impacts of poverty are more severe for people living in high poverty communities than their counterparts living in more mixed-income communities. Research shows that growing up in high poverty communities can impact children's cognitive development and school performance and can impact adult employment and earnings as well as health outcomes.

Oregon can address poverty at the community level by building on the collaborative, community-based infrastructures and processes that have proven successful over the past years. For example, we now have community-based partnerships that are engaging and integrating public, private and civic sectors in robust ways. These regional efforts in health (Coordinated Care Organizations), early education (Early Learning Hubs), education (Regional Achievement Collaboratives), workforce (Workforce Investment Boards) and economic development (Regional Solutions Advisory Committees) are built to expand the state's capacity to address complex problems and take action in local communities to improve outcomes and reduce disparities.

These regional structures allow Oregon a unique opportunity to address poverty by supporting the development of community-driven, multi-sector solutions that are regionally and culturally relevant. For example, in the past two years, through a grant from the Northwest Area Foundation to the Oregon Business Council, Oregon Solutions (a project located at Portland State University in the National Policy Consensus Center) has supported community based projects to address poverty in communities of concentrated poverty such as Career Technical Education in Malheur County, post-secondary encouragement in Jackson/Josephine counties, and early reading with the Klamath Tribes and Chiloquin community.


Communities that are excited by the challenge of addressing concentrated poverty need technical support and resources to invest in evidence-based projects that are culturally appropriate and based on the assets of their community. They need funds support both start-ups with initial seed funding and for early stage initiatives that are in process and need funding to advance their objectives. The **Center for Community Innovation and a Community Leverage Fund** is designed specifically to meet these key needs.

Much of the funding will likely go to rural communities many of which are unfortunately experiencing high poverty levels. These communities often have fewer resources to make the community based collaboratives described above successful and where dollars go a long way to help them achieve their objectives.

There is a triple payback from these types of investments --- improving individual success in breaking the cycle of poverty, preparing a better workforce for tomorrow, and reducing social costs. This is a worthwhile investment with potential for significant returns for individuals, communities and the state. We urge you to support the proposal for a **Center for Community Innovation and a Community Leverage Fund**.

Thank you for your service to those most in need.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Duncan Wyse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Duncan Wyse, President, Oregon Business Council

Bill Johnson, President, Sage Farms and OBC Poverty TF member

Ken Thrasher, Chairman and CEO, Compli and OBC Poverty TF member

Bill Thorndike, President, Medford Fabrication and OBC Poverty TF member

Dave Underriner, Chief Executive, Providence Health Services and OBC Poverty TF Chair