



April 9, 2015

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen and members of the Senate Committee On Human Services and Early Childhood,

The Oregon Business Council Poverty Task Force is pleased to support **SB 890** to establish a Task Force on Measures of Economic and Social Success. 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 better defining poverty and the results we want for increasing the prosperity of all Oregonians.

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) has many shortcomings but it persists in use because it is comparable across states and time. The FPL is insufficient not only because of how it determines the financial levels that define poverty, but also because it doesn't recognize that being in poverty is more than not just having enough money to meet basic needs. Poverty is also about access to opportunities, choices, and social engagement in communities. Adopting new measures would move us from defining poverty as a shortage of "what counts", that is money, to "what matters" such as affordable housing, meaningful participation in communities, quality education, access to mental health and substance abuse treatment, reduction of stress, and connections.

Oregon should adopt a definition for and measures of prosperity for individuals and communities including focusing on measures that show the disparate impacts of poverty on people of color, immigrants, genders, and rural populations. We believe these measures can help guide budget decisions as well as other state and local agency and private sector initiatives.

The Oregon Business Council has already identified resources to engage Oregon's Kitchen Table to do a consultation to ask Oregonians to weigh in on questions that will contribute to the Task Force's work. These questions could include what does it mean to meet basic needs versus what does it mean to have social and economic well-being and what are the values that should underlie our decisions about what constitutes poverty?

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, written over a white background.

Duncan Wyse, President, Oregon Business Council
Bill Thorndike, President, Medford Fabrication and OBC Poverty TF member
Dave Underriner, Chief Executive, Providence Health Services and OBC Poverty TF Chair