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**HOUSE REVENUE COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING ON HB 2072 & HB 2898**

APRIL 27, 2015 1:00 PM, HR A

REPRESENTATIVE PHIL BARNHART, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE CLIFF BENTZ, VICE-CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE JESSICA VEGA PEDERSON, VICE-CHAIR

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Chair Barnhart, Vice-Chairs Vega Pederson and Bentz, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lana Veenker. I am a casting director based in Portland, Oregon, and the president of Cast Iron Studios, a local film and television casting company, established in 1999. I'm testifying today in support of HB 2072 and HB 2898, in order to share with you what happens to real working people when the Oregon Production Incentive Fund is expanded.

During the recession, my mom and her husband of 23 years both lost their jobs on the same day. After a few years of economic free fall, their financial situation took its toll on their already rocky marriage, and one day in October 2013, my mom showed up on my doorstep with all of her suitcases.

Having worked in this industry for more than 20 years, I quickly realized this could be the premise of a new sitcom. My mom is known in my family as a cross between Mother Teresa and Lucille Ball. At one point, while I was out of town on a business trip, she managed to get a hold of an industrial-sized caulking gun and, with the best intentions, caulked the grout on all of my bathroom tiles, creating a floor-to-ceiling mess that has left its scars to this day.

But jokes aside, the only reason I was able to support her for a year and get her back on her feet was the expansion of OPIF that brought us *Wild* and *The Librarians* (in addition to *Grimm*, which we were already casting). In September 2014, off the heels of our busiest summer on record, I was even able to cover the down payment and closing costs on her new home (thank goodness!). She is now thriving for the first time in years.

Last year, our company had set a goal to get revenue back to pre-recession levels, but because the Legislature had recently increased OPIF from \$7.5M to \$10M, we blew past all of our projections to have our busiest year on record.

In just one year, I was able to buy all new computers for the office, establish the company's first employer-matching retirement plan, pay generous bonuses to full-time staff, create two new part-time positions, and give raises to all existing employees.

On top of this, my most senior employee bought her first home, thanks to her increased income, and I had the funds to send her on three months of paid maternity leave.

The Film Office estimates that even with a marginal increase in OPIF, Oregon could support another multi-season television series, another film the size of *Wild*, as well as several indigenous independent productions.

Needless to say, we've already decided that if HB 2072 passes this session, we will be creating at least one more full-time position to handle the workload.

Knowing that our industry creates such great jobs with benefits, it breaks my heart to hear that—even with the increase we got last session that made it such a transformative year for me and my team—all of Oregon's incentive funds were fully committed within weeks after the fiscal year began.

This caused us to lose *Backstrom*, the Rainn Wilson TV series that was written for Portland, because we didn't have the incentive funds to compete with Vancouver BC. It caused us to lose the Lewis and Clark mini-series, *Undaunted Courage*, to upstate New York, for the same reason. In fact, the Film Office was forced to turn away at least 15-20 projects within the first two months of the fiscal year alone.

Imagine the countless new jobs across the state that would have been created, if our incentive fund had been sufficient to last the entire year, and not run out after only two months. Jobs make all the difference when it comes to being able to care for a family member in crisis, or afford a child's daycare. Jobs pay for our social services. They keep our graduating students in state. And these are the clean, green, high-tech, family-wage, jobs of the future that we want and need to invest in.

Oregon film and video is where the Oregon wine industry was 20-30 years ago, and we are uniquely poised to compete in this creative, high-tech arena. I urge you to support HB 2072 and HB 2898, which will create immediate jobs for Oregonians and help our industry continue to grow.