



County of Malheur

251 'B' STREET WEST • VALE, OREGON 97918

Monday, March 20, 2017

House Committee on Economic Development and Trade
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Malheur County Testimony in Support of House Bill 2012

Chair Lininger and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Dan Joyce, Malheur County Judge. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2012. However, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank Representative Cliff Bentz and House Speaker Tina Kotek for bringing this bill forward. I would also like to thank Speaker Kotek for taking time during the interim to personally visit Malheur County. None of us could remember Malheur County ever receiving a visit from a Speaker of the House and so her presence meant a lot to everyone here.

I would like to begin my remarks by first sharing why we feel this legislation is needed.

To those who have not visited Malheur County, we are located on the Idaho/Oregon border. Our communities are separated from those in Idaho by the width of the Snake River. For years, we have struggled with the challenges this geographic location presents. However, recently, those challenges have become more difficult with policy decisions made at both the state and federal levels. These decisions have created an economic and often social disparity between our communities from those across the river. As a result, we have seen an increase in companies moving less than one mile across the river to Idaho. As the county judge, I must tell you that this is heartbreaking to see. These individuals grew up here, have kids in our school systems, and sponsor local events and programs for the betterment of the area. They care about our communities. However, they often feel their voices are not heard over political and social organizations from the valley.

In addition, Malheur County often sees a significant percentage of unemployed individuals move to our side of the border due to larger incomes that can be obtained from unemployment and social safety-net programs in Oregon in comparison to Idaho. This helps contribute to Malheur County's poverty levels being the highest in the state. While we are welcoming and compassionate, the un-proportionate balance of unemployed individuals moving in and business moving out creates a difficult fiscal and social situation which has rippling effects through our education, judicial, and community services.

So how does HB 2012 address these issues?

The bill would create the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development region, board, and fund. The mission of the board and fund would be to develop a plan to enhance our workforce and economic development. Malheur County has



County of Malheur

251 'B' STREET WEST • VALE, OREGON 97918

great potential, and HB 2012 allows us to bring together the talents of our local communities to develop the tools needed to address and solve our unique problems. In addition, this bill would be a gesture and recognition to our communities and business owners that their voice is heard and their contributions are valued.

Oregonians are diverse geographically, culturally, politically, and economically. Acknowledging this makes us stronger and more capable of creating a community, county, and state that works for everyone.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I ask for your support on House Bill 2012.

Best Regards,

Dan Joyce, Judge
Malheur County