



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2012
House Committee on Economic Development and Trade

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek
March 20, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2012 today.

The idea for a bill focused on supporting economic competitiveness in the Ontario area came out of a trip I made to Eastern Oregon last summer at Representative Bentz's invitation.

During the three-day trip last June, Representative Bentz hosted a series of meetings with local leaders and residents, as well as tours of local businesses along Oregon's border with Idaho. I saw firsthand how businesses and communities in Eastern Oregon are struggling to compete with the fast-growing metro area across the border.

House Bill 2012 would designate Ontario, Vale, Nyssa, and the immediate surrounding area in southeast Oregon as the "Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region." It would create a new, locally driven, seven-member board to identify policies and strategies that would promote workforce and economic growth in the region and award targeted grants and loans to support economic growth. The bill requests \$10 million to support the initiative.

It also creates a process for the board to call attention to land use issues that are repeatedly putting Malheur County at a disadvantage to communities across the border. Those issues would have to be considered in a public hearing and the Department of Land Conservation and Development could either provide waivers of existing rules or recommend that the legislature consider changing the law.

Each community in Oregon faces unique challenges – from North Portland to Ontario. We are at our best when we find a way to come together to solve them as Oregonians. This bill is a prime example. It provides state funding and support, while keeping the local community in the lead.

I hope you'll join me in supporting House Bill 2012.