

April 04, 2017

To: Joint Ways & Means Education Committee
From: Charles Hopewell, President, Jewett-Cameron Companies

Re: Public Testimony, Oregon Workforce Investment Board

Co-Chairs Representative Smith Warner and Senator Monroe and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to briefly discuss the great work of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board which resides under the auspices of the HECC. My intention is more to answer any of your questions regarding this body and its work from a business person's perspective. Please feel free at any time to stop me for those questions.

While the percentage of funding for the OWIB from the HECC's budget is small, it remains critical especially given what we are hearing as increasing pressures at the Federal level of potential cuts to WIOA that could be both dramatic as well as catastrophic for our workforce efforts. Let me be clear – workforce development and economic development are HAND IN HAND activities. As a business person who has managed multiple businesses for 35+ years in this state, I can attest to the continuing need to focus our efforts on Oregon's skill needs. Business simply can't grow without talent – and talent IS the goal of workforce development. This is truly a collaborative effort that is essential to Oregon's future.

Your OWIB continues to be driven by an industry led mix that continues to work with Oregon's regional diversity through the Local Workforce Development Boards. Our strategic plan continues to ask these local boards to drive a system that meets the needs of two customers... those looking for opportunity – the job seeker; and those providing opportunity – businesses. I continue to see, touch and hear of the amazing collaborative efforts throughout Oregon's communities through the local boards. The LWDB's are convenors that bring the breadth of services of a community together to align and launch efforts to meet the regional needs of their workforce and business partners.

Recently, I attended a manufacturing review put on by Worksystems, the Multnomah/Washington County LWDB, as a report card of such regarding how they are acting on their business led manufacturing agenda. At this session, I saw education, service providers, businesses, and independent community resources all talk about their specific COORDINATED efforts to "skill up" the talent necessary to hit the needs of businesses WHO HAVE JOBS RIGHT NOW, are willing to hire and continue training, but who repeatedly find they don't have sufficient talent to grow. What I saw is your strategic plan in action – and a body of varying agencies all continually referencing the same strategic drumbeat towards the goal of – employing those that need work in jobs that need talent.

What OWIB does "on the ground" throughout Oregon is truly collaborative. What perhaps you all don't see is the creativity these local Boards continue to exert in "how" they fund and build their programs of workforce assistance. Through their collaboration, not just with their own regional area, but working with contiguous LWDB's and literally a myriad of agencies or resources, they collaborate to bring into Oregon grant funding that stretches ALL dollars to touch Oregon's workforce needs. This ongoing active strategy leverages the smaller dollars that pass through this particular body's oversight in dramatically larger resources for our communities. From a business perspective, this is also a crucial approach in that

it diversifies the risk of single stream income/funding – thus hopefully allowing for better consistency of local contribution in the long run.

The OWIB continues to monitor the specifics of the strategic plan through active metrics. We have established a “dashboard” now present on our website that quickly allows the reader to see objective data analysis backing up initiatives. We continue to monitor our efforts through several means. Each business member of our State wide board is also a liaison to a local Board, acting as a conduit for assistance, perspective and advocacy as well as making sure that local Board remains aligned to the overall State wide objectives as well. Work of the OWIB is accomplished in active subcommittees – such as the WIOA Implementation Committee where we make sure that our State not only aligns with the WIOA policy guidelines, but is innovative and creative in “how” we align. The Strategic Plan continues to focus on our State’s youth and how they are provided opportunity to gain exposure and active participation in key career pathways. And this Board is an active member of the National Governors Association, which we have just successfully convinced to bring this year’s conference to Portland in August.

My personal appeal today is not necessarily one of funding, although like many others, I feel there continues to be funding pressures and as briefly mentioned, those could dramatically increase should the Federal Government re-direct funds away from WIOA. More so today, this is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the hard work and meaningful contributions to Oregon’s economy that have come about through the OWIB, and of course, the HECC. I do urge your continued focus on the Board and help us continue to help Oregon’s workforce.

Respectfully Submitted,



Charles Hopewell
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