

April 10, 2017

To: Joint Subcommittee on Education

From: Ben Deumling - Owner, Zena Forest Products

Re: Public Testimony, Oregon Community College, Small Business Development Centers

Co-Chairs Representative Smith Warner and Senator Monroe and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify. My Name is Ben Deumling and I run Zena Forest products which is a vertically integrated forest, sawmill and millwork operation. I work with our local hardwood resource and manufacture high quality hardwood lumber and flooring. 99% of my sales are within Oregon. Zena Forest Products is a family run business, and started small with the initial recognition of an unmet market and an underutilized resource.

As an entrepreneur and small business owner, I have pursued many opportunities for business advice and professional development over the years. Three years ago I was introduced to the Chemeketa Small Business Management Program, and I have been participating in the program ever since.

Over the last nine years, I have slowly grown my business from its humble beginnings as a one man operation to a business with 4 employees and 2 FTE contractors, and an annual gross revenue of over half a million dollars. The bulk of that growth has occurred over the last three years that I have been participating in the SBM program.

The combination of relevant and engaging classes, dedicated mentors, and access to business development resources beyond SBM, make for a stellar program. I stand here today, speaking not just for myself, but on behalf of all the businesses that benefit from these services. As a cohort, the 60 businesses from the mid-valley enrolled in the Chemeketa SBM program during 2015 started with \$40 million in annual sales and employing a total of 406 full and part time positions. They ended the year with \$47.4 million in annual sales, and employing a total of 476 full and part time positions. This is a 18% and 17% increase respectively. These numbers prove more than anything, the success of the Small Business Management program.

Please continue to fund the Small Business Development Centers, and the SBM program in particular at least at their current level. Money invested in local business development has a very high rate of return for our State and local economies. For every dollar invested in the SBDC's, five dollars is returned to the state in increased tax revenue.

Small local businesses are huge drivers of Oregon's economy, and in this era of global competition and corporate dominance, I mean it when I say that we need all the help we can get.

Thank you for your time.