

January 25, 2019

Senate Committee on Business and General Government  
Senator Chuck Riley, Chair  
Senator Fred Girod, Vice-Chair  
Senator Mark Hass, Member  
Senator Alan Olsen, Member  
Senator Michael Dembrow, Member  
900 Court St., NE, S-303  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: SB 258 - Building Entrepreneurial Capacity in Rural Oregon**

Dear Senators Riley, Girod, Hass, Olsen, and Dembrow,

My name is Linda Nichols-Plowman and I am an entrepreneur in Phoenix, Oregon (a rural community near Medford) who has benefited from Venture Catalyst support in my community.

I am writing to urge you to support SB 258, a bill to fund a statewide network of Venture Catalysts who would focus on connecting entrepreneurs in Oregon's rural communities—like me—with **people** (mentors & talent), **programs** (workshops & accelerators), **physical assets** (space & equipment), and **capital** (loans & equity).

The name of my start-up company is Interactive Media Publishing, and our website is ExploringRobots.com. We provide STEM solutions to K-12 schools (public and private) throughout the US. STEM and computer science forces students to think critically and communicate in the digital world, while giving them a competitive advantage in our ever-evolving technological world.

In 2017, I connected with Rick Hood, a Venture Catalyst with one of the organizations identified in SB 258 that would build entrepreneurial capacity and support entrepreneurial growth in rural Oregon by developing regional assets and building a statewide network of resources.

Rick Hood helped by introducing me to Craft3 Bank and to secure a loan for \$30,000 to market our products and services. Later Rick Hood was replaced with Alex Palmer and he also helped me create a 5 minute pitch to give to Venture Capitalists. I participated in a local Venture competition put on by the Venture Catalyst organization in Grants Pass in 2018 and came in second, thanks to the wonderful coaching that I received.

With the assistance of Rick Hood and Alex Palmer, our company, Interactive Media Publishing, has increased sales by on third in 2018, and is on track to double sales in 2019. This will allow us to hire sales and marketing consultants and add 3 to 4 more people and scale up faster than we would have without their assistance. We have bootstrapped this business from the start,

but know that to grow we will need to secure capital with Venture funding. Having people with that expertise in our community is extremely valuable to us.

Having Venture Catalyst support available to me in Medford, Oregon has meant that I could get the help I needed to grow my business without having to leave my community. Not only do I get to stay in the city I love, but I also get to contribute to boosting its economy and building the foundation for its future.

I encourage you to support SB 258 to ensure Oregon's *rural* entrepreneurs—like me—have access to the same resources that *urban* entrepreneurs have. A statewide network of Venture Catalysts will provide long-term economic stability and growth for all Oregonians.

Respectfully,  
Linda Nichols-Plowman  
CEO  
Interactive Media Publishing