

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 Leah Fanning and I am an entrepreneur in Ashland, Oregon 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 Natural Earth Paint. We manufacture natural and non-toxic art supplies, face paints and craft kits. In 2018, I connected with Alex Palmer, 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.

Alex Palmer helped me by prepare for a pitch contest and then I won the contest and received the \$500 prize towards my business growth.

With Alex Palmer's assistance, Natural Earth Paint has hired a chemist to aid in the formulation of a new product.

Having Venture Catalyst support available to me in Ashland 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,

Leah Fanning

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah Fanning". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, decorative flourish at the end of the word "Fanning".