

**Lori Stegmann**  
**Multnomah County Commissioner**  
Representing East County, District 4



3/18/2019

House Committee on Economic Development  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee,

In a time where we have seen our economy boom and average incomes rise, many have been left out of this opportunity and are still struggling to make ends meet. In East Multnomah County, the area with the highest poverty level in Oregon, there are 54,264 of our residents living in poverty – 57% of whom are people of color. Earnings in East Multnomah County have not kept pace with earnings in the greater Portland Metro area. Between 2007 and 2014, earnings by full-time workers increased by 13 percent in Portland and decreased by 7 percent in East Multnomah County. If you were to divide our county in half along 82nd and create two states, West Multnomah County would be the 2nd wealthiest state (per capita) in the United States and East Multnomah County would be the 2nd poorest state. This is unacceptable. Using this same methodology compared to the rest of our Oregon counties, East County is in the top three for poverty and number one for child poverty in our own state.

Employers grapple with a shortage of skilled labor to drive productivity and growth while unskilled residents struggle with insufficient, stagnating wages. Industry suffers without a skilled, diverse, and local workforce. Filling this gap by training and matching skilled workers with employers is a win-win. Occupational training and job placement will benefit immigrants and communities of color who also often experience a high level of poverty.

Jobs and economic development are vital for communities to thrive, and I know that if this bill passes, it will have a significant impact for folks in my district. The lack of investment into East Multnomah County has produced poor outcomes. It is clear that the needs are great and that a state investment will yield a stronger workforce that will benefit a historically underserved community. I ask for your recognition of these unmet needs in East Multnomah County and strongly urge you to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to share my East County perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Stegmann".

Commissioner Lori Stegmann, Multnomah County District 4