

March 12, 2019

Eugene's Testimony in Support of House Bill 2934

The Honorable John Lively
House Committee on Economic Development Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: In Support of Innovation Districts - House Bill 2934

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Bonham and members of the Committee:

We are providing written testimony in support of House Bill 2934 from a number of community stakeholders that are committed to the success of Eugene's Innovation District. Our Innovation District in Eugene is at the early stages and would benefit greatly from the support from the State of Oregon.

Over the past 5 years, we have come a long way in our work to foster the entrepreneurial ecosystem across the region. This progress has come as result of a very intentional commitment from our core public and the private partners to change the way we were commercializing research and collaborating towards supporting early-stage companies. Building off the collaborative stakeholder relationships between the City of Eugene, the University of Oregon, the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, and the private sector we are launching the next generation Eugene's innovation ecosystem. The funding in this bill would allow us to create an organization (501c3) that would tackle complex community-wide innovation issues, executing the following vision:

"To create an innovation district that will foster new and collaborative approaches to pressing community social, economic, and environmental problems that have a significant impact on Eugene's authentic livability and culture."

Eugene's Innovation District encompasses downtown, the riverfront, over to the Knight Campus at the University of Oregon that also includes an Opportunity Zone. We are building a collaborative leadership model in which a much broader group of community stakeholders agree to a strategic plan for the innovation district, and then align policies and investments, with goals to:

1. Celebrate and reward innovation and build a new narrative/brand for the community.
2. Create or support programs that drive cultural change centered on community-wide innovation.

3. Leverage the ecosystem work to date towards an innovation district that ties together entrepreneurial programs, sector strategies, placemaking (downtown strategies, riverfront and 5th Street developments, with the UO Knight Campus), and public policy in new creative ways.

This bill would also enable the formation of a statewide network of innovation districts that will share best practices and learning to enable efficient deployment of state dollars to promote local economic growth and job creation. HB 2934 builds off successful investments made by Business Oregon and Oregon Inc. to strengthen the connections between the state’s research universities, business accelerators and incubators, and entrepreneurs. It promotes a “Grow Our Own” approach where investments made by the state of Oregon have their impact remain in our local communities.

We strongly urge the House Economic Development Subcommittee to pass the bill out of committee with referral to the Joint Ways and Means Committee.

Thank you again for supporting House Bill 2934.



EUGENETECH.ORG

