



320 SW Century Dr.  
Bend, OR 97702

March 25, 2019

House Committee on Economic Development  
900 Court Street NBE, Room 333  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 3251 Outdoor Industry Competitiveness Fund

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Fahey:

As a member of Oregon's robust outdoor products industry, I'm writing to express my fervent support of HB 3251. In 2014 I co-founded Personal Best Products, LLC (DBA Zealios) in Berkeley, CA. Our mission was to produce the best sunscreen on the planet. Completing this mission was immediately complicated by the fact that my wife and I had decided to move to Bend, OR. The initial plan was for me to work remotely from Bend and travel down to Berkeley as needed.

Prior to the move, I invited my business partner on a weekend trip to Bend to show him the town. We decided to set up a few meetings to see if we could get a feel for the small business community in town. Through a family friend we set up a coffee date with Gary Bracelin, co-founder of the Bend Outdoor Worx and the Oregon Outdoor Alliance. Within 20 minutes of meeting Gary we had filled our weekend with meetings varying from local business leaders to business development contacts at EDCO. In short, we got more done in two days than we had in weeks worth of networking in the Bay Area. At the end of the weekend, both my business partner and I agreed that we had to move Zealios to Bend. It was happening here!

We began attending regular meetings of the Oregon Outdoor Alliance (OOA), and eventually accepted a spot in BOW's fourth cohort. Our experience with BOW was nothing short of transformational. Their mentorship and connections in the outdoor products industry provided Zealios with the foundation needed to grow. We have grown over 200% since completing the program and have hired two salaried employees to our small and growing team. In fact, my positive experience with OOA/BOW motivated me to join the OOA board of directors, where I currently serve as the Vice President.

While serving on the OOA board, I've seen similar success stories countless times. Zealios did not move to Bend because of tax breaks or property abatements. Like many outdoor start-ups, we chose Bend because of the robust business community that had been fostered by OOA and BOW. With a modest amount of state funding, I'm confident that BOW and OOA can scale their model and make Oregon the epicenter of the outdoor products industry in the United States.

Sincerely,

Austin A Britts  
Co-Founder, Zealios // Vice President, Oregon Outdoor Alliance