

Hecd.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov  
House Committee on Economic Development  
900 Court Street NBE, Room 333  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB3251 Outdoor Industry Competitiveness Fund

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Bonham and Fahey,

I am Chris Kratsch co-founder of The Robert Axle Project a manufacturer of bicycle components that are entirely produced in The State of Oregon. We started in 2014 out of our house in Bend as a hobby business. After just one year of business we were accepted into the outdoor accelerator program of Bend Outdoor Works (BOW). I can tell you with no reservations that their 6-month program of intense mentoring is the reason our business is thriving today. BOW provided us with a solid foundation and framework upon which to build our business. One specific aspect that this mentoring/accelerator provided us is vetted contacts. Being directed to quality local resources saved us a ton of time and money, neither of which did we have to spare. I have learned that much of what makes a business successful is the people and vendors behind the scenes.

I would have never imagined the business that I co-founded would be what is today. However, as an Accelerator, that is exactly what BOW expected. They prepared us for the growth and helped us find funding for our startup business.

In the Fall of 2015, we won the inaugural BOW Breakout Award grant \$10,000. We invested all of that money on a locally built website that is the foundation of our business today. We are a direct example of how their grant help local businesses succeed. With House Bill 3251 there could be many more successful businesses like ours. Our business is just one example that has created tax income for the state, created jobs in the state, and has caused other businesses in the state to expand. In reviewing our expenses from our 2018 fiscal year, I can see that +65% of our revenue went right back into payroll and expenses here in the state of Oregon. Beyond money we also bring worldwide awareness of the natural outdoor resources and welcoming business environment here in The State of Oregon.

Outdoor product companies are different than other product companies. Our customers demand authenticity in our brands. Our customers can smell a fake from miles away. Our products require real world testing and a passion for our chosen markets. This program cannot be run by The Office of Outdoor Recreation as those are not business owners. They will not see which brands have real opportunity in front of them vs those that will unfortunately not succeed. This program requires explicit experience in creating running and growing outdoor product businesses. That is a very different task than managing public lands or advocating for policy, this is business. These are the reasons why House Bill 3251 matters.

Thank you.



Chris Kratsch  
Co-Founder, The Robert Axle Project