

May 6, 2019

House Rules Committee,

Written Testimony of Non Support for HB 3431

Dear Chairperson Paul Holvey, and Committee Members

My name is Lewanda Miranda; I live and work in La Grande, (Eastern Oregon). I am a successful blind business woman and tax paying Oregonian, I have been in the Business Enterprise Program, for the last 23 yrs. I am also, a national board member of the National Association of Blind Merchants, which enables me to advocate for blind individuals nationally, and blind Oregonians, locally as well.

As identified above, I am in opposition to HB3431, which I believe is a threat to the employment opportunities for persons who are blind here in Oregon.

This is a proposed bill where Metro, takes action to become excluded from the Oregon Revised Statutes that govern the Business Enterprise Program of Oregon, ORS 346, 510-570.

With over a 70% unemployment rate among persons who are blind this broad sweeping and ambiguous proposed language, is an attempt to circumvent the law and is most concerning.

I believe the concerns that Metro shares can be addressed by way of a Memorandum of Agreement with the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and/or by way of clarifying administrative rules.

While in no way do we intend to harm Metro, we need to protect these vital and important employment opportunities for those who are blind here in Oregon.

It is my understanding, that talks are underway with Metro, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and a representative of the Blind Vendors Committee, with some progress being made thus far.

In 2017 when HB 3253, was passed and enacted into law, amending the State Statutes, Metro, and or any other of the entities trying to get exempted had the opportunity to provide a fiscal impact but did not, nor did they during the Fiscal Impact Study relevant to the Administrative Rules writing process.

In closing, I truly believe that taking the time to consider such impacts, and as well working together with Metro, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and the Business Enterprise Consumer Committee can resolve the concerns raised by Metro, and as well protect the employment opportunities intended for persons who are blind.

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule, to take these matters provided to you, in consideration.

Respectfully,

Lewanda Miranda

Business Enterprise Program-Licensed Blind Vendor.