

Please accept the following testimony in support of HB4033. Thank you very much.

Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN) is a statewide, sector-agnostic entrepreneur support organization. The nonprofit is named in HB4033 to administer and conduct a statewide assessment in 2020 of the barriers to capital access by entrepreneurs, especially women, founders of color, veterans, and rural founders. Financing a startup is tough in nearly all situations, and this study would help both clarify the contours of the challenges, and illuminate potential solutions to meet the varying needs of different types of entrepreneurs.

What we're calling the "**Oregon Capital Access Scan**" would be coordinated with and complementary to the Oregon Capital Scan (OCS). I was invited to attend the OCS Steering Committee meeting last week, where its members affirmed that the OCS is focused on assessing the availability and deployment of capital from the "supply side" perspective – meaning policymakers, banks, venture capitalists, and other types of lenders and investors. The OCS Steering Committee sees potential in the Capital Access Scan to provide the complementary "demand side" view – both surfacing key needs from the entrepreneurs' perspectives and amplifying their voices directly to the investment community and policymakers. As currently described in the bill, the "study" has a higher price tag than the OCS. This is because, like a traditional market research study, this effort would include both quantitative data collection and qualitative research (i.e. interviews and focus groups), with analysis to identify specific capital access blockages from the entrepreneurs' perspectives. However, unlike a traditional study, this assessment is also proposed to be a "**participatory design process**" facilitating entrepreneurs statewide in not only making their voices heard, but in connecting with each other, identifying common needs, and co-creating the capital access solutions that would best support their success. Much of the funding would be passed through as stipends directly for entrepreneurs to afford travel and time away from their businesses. As envisioned, the "not-just-a-study" would create an on-ramp for entrepreneurs to engage directly in resolving capital access blockages, without getting mired in the more bureaucratic processes required of policymaking.

Such an undertaking would certainly require broad collaboration from players within the entrepreneurial ecosystem statewide. Pending confirmation and funding by the Oregon Legislature, OEN will convene a **Capital Access Scan Steering Committee** to guide the effort, help identify necessary match funding, and oversee an RFP process for the components of the project that would be contracted. Vital to the success of this effort will be partnership with community-based organizations serving communities of color, rural entrepreneurs, veterans and women founders, and steering committee representation from individuals with lived experience as such entrepreneurs. Information on how to get involved will be made available through OEN's newsletters and website as it becomes available, if the legislation passes.

Before closing, I want to say to those of you reading this who know that financing a startup is hard no matter what kind of founder you are and fear that important voices will be left out given this bill's focus on underrepresented entrepreneurs, know that your voices will be heard too. Dedicated effort put toward listening to voices that are often drowned out doesn't detract from hearing the main chorus. The voices of those not specifically called out in this legislation are threaded throughout the system and in many ways define the frame of the conversation itself. The good news for all of us is that any efforts ultimately made to reduce capital access barriers for underrepresented founders will help construct a more dynamic and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem for us all.

--

Amanda Osborne, President & Executive Director
Oregon Entrepreneurs Network (OEN) | www.oen.org

amanda@oen.org | (503) 333-0134 | @aoborne | she/hers