



February 4, 2020

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

RE: Support for HB 4157 Outdoor Industry Competitiveness Fund

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Wilson and Fahey:

My name is Van Schoessler – I am one of the founders of Oregon Outdoor Alliance based in Bend. Also, I am President of Base Camp Oregon.

When I moved to Bend in 2010 I witnessed a town under duress during the recession because of downturns in the construction and tourism industries. Some of us in the outdoor industry felt that our industry could bolster the economy and even out the reliance on construction and tourism. The feeling was that the outdoor industry was a natural for Bend and would be very stable and offer job opportunities.

OOA organized and put forth bi-monthly networking meetings that lead to support for start-ups and small companies, mentoring, financing and connections to fill the gaps in company functions like sales, marketing, product development, etc. We enlisted partners for OOA that included Business Oregon, EDCO, SBDC, Bend Outdoor Worx and other resources that companies could partner with to launch and grow their businesses. In addition, we got support from larger local outdoor companies such as Hydro Flask, Ruffwear and Kialoa to lend a hand with mentoring, sharing their stories and adding funding for our events.

The direct result has been a vibrant outdoor industry ecosystem that has helped to launch several successful companies and to help small companies grow bigger.

The current climate for launching an outdoor company in Bend has never been better, however these companies need funding in order to get their product into the market. We have found that time after time companies grow to a certain point and then stall out because of the challenge of raising money to fuel growth.

The outdoor industry can make a big impact on the economic vitality of Oregon.

My ask is that you pass HB4157 in order to close the gap on funding and resource shortages for outdoor companies.

Sincerely,
Van Schoessler

