

Feb 05, 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 Bonham and Fahey:

My name is Jesse Thomas, I am co-founder and CEO of Picky Bars, Inc., and on the Board of Directors on the Oregon Outdoor Alliance. I am writing to show my support, and ask that you that you pass, HB4157 to help bolster the outdoor recreation industry in Oregon.

I was born and raised in Bend. When I left for Stanford 20 years ago, it was my goal to eventually build a business back in my hometown. At the time, the opportunities were admittedly limited due to Bend's industry concentration of seasonal recreation and housing.

I moved back to Bend seven years ago with two-employee startup athletic food products company - Picky Bars. I didn't know what to expect, but hoped that I could develop the company locally, providing jobs and investment in my hometown. I reached out to local business people for guidance and support, and was met with open arms. I formed connections with leaders at Hydroflask, Ruffwear, Kialoa, Oregon Outdoor Alliance, and the Bend Outdoor Worx.

In large part due to that support, my company has grown to 11 employees, with more projected on the way. Food products is obviously an intensely competitive industry, but I believe our base in Bend (and Oregon in general) gives us a leg up for hiring people with a passion for the outdoors, brand authenticity in our market, and building a sustainable company culture around a balanced work hard / play hard mentality.

While we've created an emerging and respected name for our brand and our products, we still have a ways to go to be truly competitive nationally. We have benefited from the local support here, but certainly statewide investment into these programs would help us significantly. I also believe that our company is a proxy for many more in the area - young companies with high potential who would benefit significantly from targeted support by the state of Oregon.

I've seen the momentum that has gained in Bend over that time, and I believe it is an area and an industry ripe for investment. The natural groundswell that I have both supported and been supported by could benefit significantly from HB3251. Thank you for your consideration.

Jesse Thomas
CEO & Co Founder - Picky Bars, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse Thomas", written in a cursive style.