

March 11, 2021

To: Chair and House Democratic Leader Barbara Smith Warner, Vice Chair and House Republican Leader Drazen, Vice Chair Paul Holvey and Members of the Committee

I write this letter in strong support of House Bill 3110. Our businesses have had a long time to include women and people from underrepresented communities on their boards of directors. Some have, but many have put it off, cited a lack of available candidates, or just simply never saw the flaws in the system in the first place.

HB 3110 is a step in the direction of ensuring that diversity is acted upon and made a reality.

As a young brown woman in Oregon, this state has a remarkably exclusionary history that continues to affect myself and those like me to this day. We will never see past wrongs of this state corrected without direct action to shift representation and access to capital for BIPOC communities. This also comes as an opportunity to address major gender disparities in representation and access to capital.

Representation matters--and currently I can say for certain I do not see more than a handful of people who look like me or have a similar background ascending the corporate ladder. I've accepted that I won't get there because of the identities I hold and the toxic culture of companies led by white men. These men have had the opportunity to dream big and know that that kind of success was an option for them. People like me are the exception to the rule.

Oregon also has an opportunity to join a national trend by requiring corporate board diversity. Twelve states have passed or are considering the passage of similar legislation.

The best part about this bill is that it is truly a win-win for corporations, women, and BIPOC communities. Women and individuals from underrepresented communities will be assured of joining other diverse voices at the highest level of corporate governance. They will serve as role models and mentors for others. Businesses benefit by receiving key information about expanded customer bases and purchasing preferences. Research has clearly shown that businesses with diverse boards are rewarded with better bottom-line performances.

Our publicly traded corporations have an opportunity to take the lead in endorsing the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion to their employees and all the citizens of Oregon.

Thank you.

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