

CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, OREGON



CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
LEGISLATIVE & PUBLIC AFFAIRS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY RECORDER

225 FIFTH STREET
SPRINGFIELD, OR
97477
(541) 726-3700
FAX (541) 726-2363

April 27, 2021

House Committee on Revenue
Chair Nathanson
Vice-Chair Pham
Vice-Chair Reschke
Members of the Committee

The City of Springfield submits this letter in strong support for HB 2343. This bill authorizes us, as the governing body and sponsor of our Springfield Community Enterprise Zone, the ability to partner with our current enterprise zone companies to temporarily assist as they continue navigating through the unanticipated impacts of the global COVID19 pandemic.

Springfield leaders have worked hard over the past decades to diversify our local market, encouraging the growth of a diverse set of traded sectors and skilled jobs. Our program currently supports nine active enterprise zone companies and over 1,000 yearly full-time jobs with \$60M in annual wages. It is important to our local economy that we emerge from COVID with these companies, jobs and opportunities still in place and recovering.

At the time of these company investments, COVID was not an anticipated risk associated with the process of start-up, scale-up or train up. Nor were the current anxieties of their employees, worrying about personal health-safety and new realities of managing childcare and hybrid school schedules. These unanticipated needs of the employer and employee are, for some, creating substantial barriers to maintaining existing enterprise zone requirements.

HB 2343 allows local agencies like ours, temporary flexibility to offer relief to the companies in our communities struggling to meet the pre-COVID Enterprise zone performance targets related to their employment. The temporary relief outlined in HB2343 is not taken lightly, especially as the program. The Enterprise Zone program, which may be State allowed, is actually utilizing local revenues as the tool for incenting the growth in long-term jobs and investments. With this bill, we are provided authority to work closely with each individual company to determine if their impacts justify the temporary flexibility and relief which may be needed to avoid penalty. Additionally, this is only a temporary addition to the program, based on impacts of COVID experienced now.

As we are all experiencing or have heard anecdotally, bringing people back to work has been complicated and difficult, even met with anxiety by the worker. This anxiety is real, as employees and employers battle with this current, intermittent, landscape. HB 2343 provides us with a temporary tool to be responsive to our employers as they work to support their workforce and also meet state mandated safety measures, eyeing their future ability to fully reopen and recover.

Sincerely,

Courtney Griesel
Economic Development and Zone Manager
City of Springfield, Oregon