

Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium

Mayor Lacey Beaty
City of Beaverton

Mayor Brian Hodson
City of Canby

Mayor Jeffrey Dalin
City of Cornelius

Mayor Gery Schirado
City of Durham

Mayor Brian Cooper
City of Fairview

Mayor Peter Truax
City of Forest Grove

Mayor Travis Stovall
City of Gresham

Mayor Tom Ellis
City of Happy Valley

Mayor Steve Callaway
City of Hillsboro

Mayor Jaimie Fender
City of King City

Mayor Joe Buck
City of Lake Oswego

Mayor Mark Hardie
City of Maywood Park

Mayor Mark Gamba
City of Milwaukie

Mayor Teri Lenahan
City of North Plains

Mayor Rachel Lyles Smith
City of Oregon City

Mayor Ted Wheeler
City of Portland

Mayor Walt Williams
City of Rivergrove

Mayor Keith Mays
City of Sherwood

Mayor Jason Snider
City of Tigard

Mayor Randy Lauer
City of Troutdale

Mayor Frank Bubenik
City of Tualatin

Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle
City of Vancouver (ex officio)

Mayor Jules Walters
City of West Linn

Mayor Julie Fitzgerald
City of Wilsonville

Mayor Scott Harden
City of Wood Village

Senator Kathleen Taylor, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support for SB 1579

Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee,

The Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium (MMC) represents the mayors of 25 cities in the Portland Metro Area, collectively home to over 1.7 million Oregonians. The MMC writes to express support for SB 1579, which would provide funding for the organizations in our communities that support economic equity for our disadvantaged residents and businesses.

The economic hardships of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected the low-income Oregonians and who were already struggling to make ends meet. But even before the pandemic, many individuals and families were unable to afford rent and basic necessities despite being employed. Wages are simply not keeping up with Oregon's cost of living and high housing costs. For Black, Indigenous and other People of Color, this dynamic is exacerbated by decades of discriminatory policies in employment, banking, housing and access to capital.

SB 1579 would address this racial wealth gap and economic instability by creating a new Economic Equity Investment Program at Business Oregon. The program would award grants to organizations that provide culturally responsive services aimed at improving economic stability, self-sufficiency, and wealth building, with a focus on Oregonians experiencing the greatest risk of economic instability. Under the program, economic risk would be measured by real estate ownership, entrepreneurship, business development, workforce development, and intergenerational wealth building, and only organizations with a proven ability to provide outreach, support, and resources to at-risk individuals and businesses would be eligible for grants. These community organizations have the trust of community members and cultural knowledge necessary to ensure the resources of the program are truly responsive to the needs of disadvantaged residents in our cities.

The mayors of the MMC urge the Senate Committee on Labor and Business to support Senate Bill 1579. We appreciate the efforts made by the Oregon Legislature to invest in our communities and improve economic equity in Oregon. Thank you for your leadership and your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

The Mayors of the MMC