

Testimony for SB 5524 and HB 2908

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 5524 and HB 2908. I am a business owner who has benefited from the important services provided by my local Small Business Development Center (SBDC). These two bills will allow these centers around the state to continue supporting small businesses like mine and, with the passage of both, could be a gamechanger for small businesses around the state. From first-time entrepreneurs, to professionals looking to expand their enterprise, to experienced founders, all find tremendous value in the many resources that SBDC's provide.

I came to the Business Development Center because I had a business that I needed help establishing & capitalizing. Through the SBDC's advising, training, access to capital, market research institute and other programs offered in my community, they helped me establish my company and rapidly triple the size of our operation over a two year period.

The SBDC assisted my development of Remote.ly, a co-working & event venue in Portland, OR. We provide critical low-commitment workspace & professional services to small businesses, entrepreneurs, students, large businesses, and more. We were able to create five full-time jobs thanks to the SBDC's expertise & local connections. This support network was invaluable as this company was my first foray into commercial real estate and professional services.

As entrepreneurs, when many of us start businesses we have a passion and problem we want to solve or a value we want to add to our communities and the world. But not all of us have all the knowledge about how to turn that product, solution or service into a viable business. The free advising and low-cost trainings that SBDCs provide are designed for working and very busy entrepreneurs. Many of us are able to stay in business and grow our ventures in communities large and small throughout the state, primarily because of the services offered by SBDCs.

Right now, the SBDCs around the state offer a variety of programs that also can include Global Trade Center advising, market research services and even assistance with CCB licensing and standing up daycare businesses. Some of our state's biggest issues right now – particularly in housing and daycare – are going to require small businesses setting up and growing to offer these services in all of our communities. SBDCs give those businesses a better chance for success.

Our state's SBDCs do a lot with a little. With the current proposed allocation within the Business Oregon budget, they can keep doing what they've been doing. But with the additional \$10 million that HB 2908 would allocate, this could allow them to offer even more programs that help more businesses to grow. The ROI of SBDC efforts are absolutely immense – after only a few meetings with the SBDCs Capital Access team and other SBDC professionals, I was able to get my business crucial funding that allowed us to create jobs & millions in revenue. HB 2908 & the proposed Business Oregon budget don't pose the question of "can we afford to fund these programs". The real question is: can we afford not to fund these programs? I am a staunch believer that no, we cannot afford to pass on funding these crucial services that support Oregon residents and businesses.

I'm proud of what I do and extremely proud of the business I've been able to build. We are solving a problem and providing important products and services. We are creating employment in communities where there often are not major employers or great opportunities right now. So

small businesses are creating those opportunities for fulfilling and meaningful employment for our communities, while we contribute financially to the wellbeing and prosperity of our hometowns and our state.

I urge you to fully fund Oregon's SBDCs through SB 5524, HB 2908 and to fully fund Oregon's community colleges.

Sincerely,

Oliver Alexander

Founder & CEO, Remote.ly