

Oregon State Legislature's Joint Ways and Means Committee

DATE: April 7, 2023

Public Testimony

RE: SB 5524 & HB 2908

Co-Chairs and Committee Members,

My name is Jessica Jones, and I am the fifth and current owner of Derek's Shoe Repair in Downtown Portland. Derek's has been in continuous operation providing craft shoe and leather accessory repair in the downtown area since 1972. I am here to advocate for funding for Oregon's SBDCs, as I have greatly benefited from their instruction and services, and I believe that access to this type of education and business support is imperative to growing business opportunities for small business owners, workers, and Oregon's communities.

I began working in the shoe repair industry in 2018, and took my first SBDC course in Summer 2021. I had never owned a business before, but I knew I loved the trade, and I was determined to be the next owner of Derek's Shoe Repair. I know a lot about shoe maintenance, repair, and cleaning, but I was really out of my depth managing the entirety of the business; I was so scared that I didn't know enough to ensure that my Derek's would survive my lack of experience and the business challenges following the height of the Covid pandemic. Determined to make it work, I purchased the business in January 2022, and started my second SBDC course, the 10-month Advanced Small Business Management program, a month later. It was next-level encouragement and support as I did the scariest, hardest thing of my life. The advising sessions with my advisor were instrumental in getting from "How can I ever do this?" to "Wow, I am actually doing it, right now!".

Having the support of my SBDC mentors, access to relevant business education, and free advising sessions, as well as being able to utilize market research and networking opportunities through the SBDC and the Small Business Management course presenters meant that I was never alone on my first-year journey. With my relationship with the SBDC, I know that I will always have support as I grow into my business, so that my business can grow and enrich my employees and community.

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

The success of these programs are a success for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Jessica Jones

Owner, Derek's Shoe Repair