

April 28, 2023

Co-Chair Senator Elizabeth Steiner  
Co-Chair Representative Tawna Sanchez  
Co-Vice-Chair Senator Fred Girod  
Co-Vice-Chair Representative David Gomberg  
Co-Vice-Chair Representative Greg Smith



## **RE: Support for Technical Assistance Funding for Rural Businesses**

To the Co-Chairs and Co-Vice-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways & Means:

Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) asks the members of the Joint Committee to consider the specific and unique impact of allocating business support resources for rural Oregon communities; specifically the important role of technical assistance in supporting aspiring entrepreneurs and recovering small business owners.

**The Governor's Recommended Budget includes \$9 million in support of vitally important technical assistance for underrepresented groups as part of Business Oregon's budget. We are requesting restoration of \$4 million for this program as part of your budget deliberations; the current proposal is at \$5 million.**

**To illustrate how these dollars have been helping rural Latino people, I would like to tell you about Marisela Ortiz, owner of ABC's Jardin de Niños:**

Marisela joined RDI's childcare business training in Hermiston in 2021. She came to the training feeling hopeless and ready to close her business, because children previously under her care were not able to use her services during the pandemic. During the class, Marisela stepped up to become a mentor to other participants, and realized the wealth of experience and knowledge she had gained caring for children over the years. After the training was completed, RDI provided Marisela with technical support and motivation to keep going using funds from Business Oregon's Technical Assistance Program. We connected her with experts who helped her create a legal childcare contract, develop a marketing video, and provide bookkeeping assistance. Marisela has also become more involved in her community and has been advocating for more childcare opportunities. Her support enabled RDI to secure Oregon Community Foundation funding for a second group training in Eastern Oregon. She will be helping RDI with the upcoming childcare business training in Boardman this July.

RDI has worked in rural Oregon for over 30 years, responding to demand from Oregon's small towns to help them address complex problems in more geographic isolation, with fewer financial resources, few models designed to fit their situation, and more confusing or less trusted information sources than larger population centers. The support provided by Business Oregon through this Technical Assistance Program and other rural initiatives has been a vital component of the success of our work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Groth  
Director of Policy & Partnerships

