



Testimony relating to HB 2908

April 30, 2023

Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

This is to thank you for making the effort to visit different regions of the state to hear from your constituents about their spending priorities. I attended your session in Newport just a week after testifying to a subcommittee of Ways and Means in the Capitol. I was moved by the number of citizens who attended the event at the Newport Performing Arts Center and I hope you found our coastal voices and concerns to be enlightening.

In 2009, in the depths of the recession, I was a business owner on the Oregon Coast. Our family business might not have survived to see 2010 were it not for the Oregon Coast Community College Small Business Development Center, where I found a wealth of resources, tools, and advice that helped us navigate those uncharted waters. I sold that business in 2013 and joined the SBDC, eager to provide that same level of support to other coastal business owners.

All told, Oregon's Small Business Development Centers have helped 626,000 businesses over the course of their existence, and House Bill 2908 – if it passes – could help us have an even greater economic impact in helping to solve our state's biggest problems and create jobs in every corner of the state.

The bill sets aside \$10 million for Business Oregon to create a grant program for the state's SBDC Network – the largest business assistance provider in the state, with 20 regional centers and a Global Trade Center in more than 43 locations across the state – to help individual centers better meet the needs of small businesses in their local communities.

Under House Bill 2908, our SBDC could be able to respond to local requests for critical programs that currently elude our budgetary capacity to execute, such as launching a culinary certificate program to support the local hospitality industry, or ignite a new youth entrepreneurship program, or expand our new childcare business accelerator program.

Driving economic development and expanding services to small businesses is the goal of the bill. The centers partner with local and regional governments and organizations to ensure small businesses have access to the best technical assistance resources available. Many clients of SBDCs – like my business was back in 2009 – are in the critical early stages when many business ideas are either made or broken. SBDCs provide expert advice and assistance to help good ideas flourish.

The Oregon SBDC network is unique in that it is a direct connection with small businesses, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and local governments in every county – in every corner – of the state. Through its shared resources, it ensures business advising and expertise of the highest caliber is available to Oregon entrepreneurs, no matter their zip code. Every single community in the state is served directly by an SBDC. As a result, they are the only economic development organization most able to have a deeper impact in communities all over the state.

The Oregon SBDC Network delivered an amazing service to the state throughout the pandemic, providing the front-line resource and referral services to small businesses that would have otherwise been absent. None of us know what other disruptions lie around the next bend, but one thing is for certain – we've learned that if Oregon enters another economic disruption with a robust, healthy SBDC Network, its chances of navigating those challenges and exiting stronger on the other side are greatly improved. HB 2908 is a rare opportunity for transformational strengthening of this proven resource.

For more information about the Oregon Small Business Development Center Network or to find your local SBDC, visit <https://oregonsbdc.org/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Price", with a period at the end.

Dave Price

Vice President, Engagement, Oregon Coast Community College
Former Director, OCCC Small Business Development Center