Submitter: Jasper Smith

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Transportation and Economic Development

Measure: SB5524

I am writing in support of Oregon Business Development Department's budget request for the 2023-2025 biennium. I am the owner and operator of Son of Man, a craft cider business based in Cascade Locks, Oregon. We have been in business since 2017. Our business is committed to highlighting the agricultural bounty of the Columbia Gorge and Oregon more generally. We source apples exclusively from Oregon farms, work with Oregon manufacturers to fabricate our production equipment and have developed a significant regional market for our ciders on the West Coast. We export our cider regionally to California and Washington, but also nationally (TX, NV, NC, SC, MI, IL) and internationally (South Korea). Our ciders are available throughout the state at restaurants, breweries and grocery stores including New Seasons and Whole Foods.

Despite operating a healthy business with good cashflow and yearly profitability, it has been difficult (impossible) for us to finance growth and investment through private financial institutions. Over the last two years Business Oregon has proactively sought to hear about our business' challenges and needs. Business Oregon representatives have worked tirelessly to help us find solutions to those challenges to facilitate the continued growth and success of our business. Michael Held, the Regional Development Officer overseeing Cascade Locks, was instrumental in helping us apply for a grant through the Small Business Sustainability Fund in conjunction with a loan through the Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund. The operational impact of these two financial injections has and will continue to be immense. The funds were used to purchase a bottling line that has reduced the time spent hand packaging by 4 or 5x, and two new fermentation tanks that allowed us to grow our production by 24%, helping us keep up with demand from our customers and spend time developing our sales markets. Without the aid from Business Oregon we would not have been able to purchase the bottling line - the bank we work with was not willing to provide an equipment loan with terms that made financial sense. The EDLF loan helped alleviate stress on our cashflow and allowed us to invest in growth that we might not otherwise has pursued.

For these reasons we strongly support the Oregon Business Development Department's budgetary request. The work they do is key to helping Oregon's small and medium sized business survive and thrive. Oregon is an epicenter of strong consumer brands, many of which start as tiny entrepreneurial ventures. Business Oregon is a meaningful actor in nurturing these businesses and by providing financial resources they help push the next great idea into view.