March 20, 2023

Senator Aaron Woods, Co-Chair
Representative David Gomberg, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development
900 Court St. NE Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Woods and Gomberg and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in support of Oregon Business Development Department's (aka Business Oregon) budget request for the 2023-2025 biennium (SB 5524), in particular the budget items that help fund Oregon's job creators – entrepreneurs and innovators, including underrepresented business owners (e.g., rural, women, veterans, Black, Indigenous, people of color, etc.).

I'm the CEO of RAIN Catalysts (formerly called Oregon RAIN) – a 501(c)(3) non-profit that is run by experienced entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ecosystem-builders. RAIN Catalysts exists to reduce barriers to entrepreneurship and innovation for underrepresented populations and communities. We are currently serving 52 underserved communities in Oregon and Washington (82% are in Oregon).

Thanks to programs created and funded by Business Oregon, we have been able to successfully serve hundreds of underrepresented entrepreneurs in Oregon by helping them start and grow new ventures, including the retention of jobs and the creation of net new jobs for Oregonians. RAIN Catalysts connects these entrepreneurs to the resources they need to accelerate their businesses and reduce their chances of failure.

I ask that you continue funding the following Business Oregon programs as they are critical to the sustainability of Oregon's entrepreneurship and innovation economy. Otherwise, Oregon risks losing our brightest entrepreneurs and innovators as well as our competitiveness in national and global markets.

1. **Rural Opportunities Initiative** ($2M)
2. **Technical Assistance** (I ask that you continue funding the TA program at $9M)
3. **Oregon Innovation Council** (support what is allocated in the Governor's budget)
4. **Oregon Growth Board** (support what is allocated in the Governor's budget)

In order to support a thriving entrepreneurship and innovation economy in Oregon the boots-on-the-ground practitioners in Oregon (like RAIN Catalysts) need the State's support to advance our economy and remain competitive. It's programs like those listed above that allow us to advance Oregon's innovation economy.

Please approve Business Oregon's budget request and consider increasing the Technical Assistance program from $5M to $9M.

Sincerely,

Caroline Cummings
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