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February 13, 2024

Senator Fred Girod, Co Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co Chair
Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
Salem OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Girod and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Microenterprise Services of Oregon (MESO) voices our support for the funding of the Greater Woodburn Opportunity Center. The project will bring 50 low-income housing units to the City of Woodburn, as well as wrap-around services for its residents and the surrounding community. These services will be delivered through the Integrated Services Delivery Model, which amplifies community assets and reduces barriers to support, while simultaneously supporting residents in affordable housing units.

Both housing and services are critical for the greater Woodburn area:

- 13.7% of residents live in poverty.
- Per capita income in Woodburn is \$22,311, compared to \$35,393 statewide.
- Children under age 5 comprise 6.9% of the population, compared to 5.4% statewide.
- 57% of Woodburn's population identify as Hispanic, compared to 13.4% statewide.
- 54% of Woodburn residents speak a language other than English in their home, compared to 15% statewide.
- 70% of adults in Woodburn are high school graduates, compared to the 91% statewide.

GWOC is an opportunity to empower and transform the lives of people in real need.

We look forward to being a GWOC space partner. MESO has been focused on poverty alleviation through entrepreneurship in under resourced communities and distressed areas. We practice our values which has led to trust building, empowerment and concrete result

I respectfully request that you approve funding for the Greater Woodburn Opportunity Center. It will empower the community and facilitate immense positive impact in our nonprofit community. If you have questions, please contact me at 503.841.3351 or email me at clewis@mesopdx.org.

Sincerely,

Cobi Lewis, CEO & Executive Director