

Mary Follo

Re: HB 4061: Relating to a unified trade strategy for Oregon; declaring an emergency.

February 2, 2026

The Rural Development Initiative is regional development nonprofit that focuses on leadership, economy building, policy, and funding in the Pacific Northwest. Since our inception in 1991, our goal has been to connect rural communities, build skills, and contribute the resources necessary to increase prosperity and vitality in rural areas. We are testifying in support of HB 4061. We believe this bill can provide necessary investment to small businesses in Oregon which will boost the overall economy.

Rural communities are often left out of the conversation when it comes to economic development. However, their needs are often similar to economically distressed communities in Oregon's metropolitan centers, but the mechanisms for addressing those needs have to be location specific. State government spending is a potential stable income stream to address this. Providing services to (for example) the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Forestry or the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development could massively increase local spending. In many cases, the state HAS to spend the money, and we believe it should be spent on local firms rather than out of state ones. Local dollars tend to stay local, further boosting the economy. For small businesses, little investments can have a huge impact and most businesses in Oregon are small businesses, therefore there can be no economic development without small business development.

We believe HB 4061 will better unify trade strategy for the state and will better align the fact that urban and rural economies are tied together.

Your consideration of these matters and solutions is much appreciated. Thank you.

Mary Follo, PhD
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