

Testimony on Industrial Readiness in Oregon

Good morning, Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Taylor Rembowski, Malheur county economic development director, and I am here today to speak about the critical importance of industrial readiness for Malheur County's economic future.

Malheur County stands at a crossroads. As Oregon's eastern gateway and a bridge to Idaho's growing economy, our county possesses unique geographic and economic advantages that remain largely untapped. Industrial readiness, our capacity to attract, support, and sustain manufacturing and industrial operations will determine whether we seize these opportunities or watch them pass us by.

Malheur County has long depended on agriculture, and while this sector remains our backbone, we cannot rely on it alone. Our tax base struggles to support essential services. Industrial development offers diversification, stability, and the kind of family-wage jobs that build communities rather than simply sustain them.

We have assets other communities would envy. We offer affordable land, access to rail and highway infrastructure through Ontario and the proximity to the Boise metropolitan area. Our agricultural expertise translates naturally to food processing and value-added manufacturing. We have water rights, available electricity, and a workforce ready to work. What we lack is readiness—the prepared infrastructure, streamlined permitting, workforce training programs, and coordinated planning that turns potential into reality.

But infrastructure without readiness is opportunity wasted. We must ensure the Industrial land in Malheur county is supported by adequate utilities and roads. Other communities along the I-84 corridor are watching, we cannot allow these assets to sit underutilized while Idaho captures the economic activity it should generate for us.

Being industry-ready means having shovel-ready sites with utilities in place, environmental assessments completed, and zoning secured. It means workforce development partnerships between our schools, Treasure Valley Community College, and potential employers. It means updated infrastructure roads, water systems, natural gas and broadband. In fact, Malheur County was the largest recipient in the state last year for rural broadband expansion at roughly 40 million dollars. It means economic development professionals actively marketing our advantages, especially our rail and highway access, and working with businesses to navigate local and state requirements efficiently. I can't tell you how many times as an Economic Development Director for the county that I show people great industrial properties but have to deliver the bad news that the essential infrastructure is lacking.

Every year we delay, other communities, especially in Idaho, are making these investments. They're capturing the businesses, the jobs, and the tax revenue that could be ours. Meanwhile, our population ages, our schools shrink, and our young families move away. We have a world-class logistics asset in the Treasure Valley Reload Center, but without comprehensive industrial readiness, it remains underutilized potential rather than realized prosperity.

A Call to Action

I urge this committee to prioritize industrial readiness through targeted investments in infrastructure around Malheur County. Support for business parks and industrial zones that leverage our rail access, expanded workforce training in logistics and manufacturing, and dedicated resources for economic development that actively markets our unique transportation advantages. These are not expenses, they are investments in Malheur County's future, investments that will return dividends in jobs, tax revenue, and community vitality for decades to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.