



Feb. 6, 2023

To: Chair and Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee  
From: Scott Bruun, OBI  
RE: Testimony in support of SB 134

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Chair Meek and Members of the Committee,

I am Scott Bruun, director of tax, fiscal and manufacturing policy for Oregon Business & Industry. OBI is a statewide association representing businesses from a wide variety of industries and from each of Oregon's 36 counties. In addition to being the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI is the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Our 1,600 member companies, more than 80% of which are small businesses, employ more than 250,000 Oregonians.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 134.

OBI fully supports Oregon's enterprise zone programs, and we fully support the extension of the state's primary enterprise zone program to 2032, as called for in SB 134.

As noted, more than 80% of OBI's members are small businesses, 100 or fewer employees. Many of these businesses have relied on enterprise zone programs over the years to help gain lasting traction. These programs have proven to be demonstrably successful tools for Oregon employers and the employees, families and communities that directly benefit. Employees, families and communities that are working, and economic vitalization that is happening, in areas of our state which have historically struggled due to lack of investment and lack of employment opportunities.

Mr. Chair, Committee, we also know that enterprise zone programs have never been more important. This is because Oregon's tax burden for all businesses has risen sharply since 2019. An Ernst & Young report from last October, which OBI commissioned, demonstrates the impact of new and rising taxes, at both the state and local levels. Since 2019, for example, Oregon has seen a 52% increase in business taxes collected; an additional 32% increase in taxes for businesses in the Portland-Metro area; and a 29% increase in our combined state and local total effective business tax burden, which is a factor of business taxes as a share of total state domestic product.

The bottom-line is that since 2019, Oregon has gone from behind the U.S. average to significantly above the U.S. average in business tax burden and above other western states, including Washington, Idaho, Utah, Arizona and even California.

Oregon does not have many tax incentive tools to help businesses offset this rising tax burden. At least not compared to other states that also have enterprise zone programs but unlike Oregon, may also have equipment and capital expenditure tax credit programs, wage and training credit programs, and research and development tax credit programs, just to name a few.

We should also recognize that many of the states that Oregon may compete against do not have the comparative land use and regulatory burden cost challenges that Oregon employers must contend with.

That's why again, in this increasingly challenging environment for Oregon employers – especially those employers operating or looking to operate in parts of the state that are trying to overcome historic economic stagnation - our enterprise zone programs have never been more important.

This is also why the Oregon Semiconductor Competitive Task Force, in its recommendations, says that we must maintain essential existing tools like enterprise zone property tax abatements, among others. It goes on to say that without these tools, Oregon would be “completely uncompetitive from a cost of construction/operation perspective.”

OBI requests that this committee provide leadership and continued support for these proven, job-creating programs, and move to pass SB 134.

Thank you.

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