

Testimony in Support of HB 5025
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development
Doris Penwell, Association of Oregon Counties
Thursday, April 20, 2017

I am here today in support of HB 5025, but most specifically the request for funding for the Governor's Regional Solutions Program and its team.

The Governor's Regional Solutions effort is very important to AOC and its member counties. Community solutions teams were formed years ago by Governor Kitzhaber as a way of solving economic development issues more quickly and in a more coordinated way among state agencies that confront economic development issues. The process, now called Regional Solutions, has grown to what it is today. We realized early on that it is near impossible for state agencies to work with 36 separate counties to provide services and solve problems. So, forming regions that encompass federal, state, local, private, educational and nonprofit input really makes it possible to efficiently serve Oregonians in their communities.

The regional advisory groups and regionally organized state agency teams are stronger today, and they really help Oregon to set local priorities to solve local problems. Sometimes those problems can be alleviated by developing priority community infrastructure of any kind, but many times the recurring need is for regulatory streamlining or aligning land use and environmental processes of state, local and federal agencies to allow a business or industry to locate or expand.

Today the Regional Solutions regions are aligned with the federal Economic Development Administration regions, to make working together on common problems and issues possible. All counties are well connected with regional teams, so when there are issues that need to be raised, we know where to do business.

Several biennia ago when it was necessary for the Legislature to cut budgets including Regional (or Community) Solutions in the Governor's Office, the counties collectively agreed that access to a Regional Solutions effort was so important that we would offer funding out of the Counties' statutorily set 2.5 % video lottery moneys to fund one-half of the administration for Regional Solutions. We still believe this is money well spent, and that practice continues in this budget.

