



February 13, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Reardon, Chair  
House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee  
900 Court St NE, H-473  
Salem, OR, 97301

Gustavo J. Cruz, Jr.  
Chair

Francesca Gambelli  
Commissioner

Dr. Alisha Moreland-  
Capuia  
Commissioner

William Myers  
Commissioner

Peter Platt  
Commissioner

Ted Wheeler  
Mayor

Kimberly Branam  
Executive Director

Dear Honorable Jeff Reardon,

I am writing on behalf of Prosper Portland to express our support for House Bill 4042, Prosperity-1000. Created by Portland voters in 1958, Prosper Portland is Portland's urban renewal and economic development agency. Prosper Portland is headed by an executive director, who reports to a five-member Board of Commissioners, appointed by the mayor and approved by Portland City Council.

HB 4042 offers an innovative approach to address poverty and build a scalable, sustainable model that supports individual and business prosperity across the State.

Since emerging from the recession, Washington and Multnomah counties have produced over 125,000 jobs and unemployment has fallen to 3.7%. But these on-average figures obscure the reality of increasing income disparity, growing low-income employment, and rising poverty caused by structural changes in the economy.

Washington and Multnomah counties are home to the highest concentrations of poverty in the State and more than 166,000 people in the region live in poverty. Forty percent of all Oregonians of color living in poverty live in the region. More than 30,000 regional residents are unemployed and thousands work full-time but can't make ends meet because of low-wages, insufficient skills and few prospects for career and wage advancement.

At the same time, regional employers that offer high quality jobs in industries such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing are facing a shortage of skilled workers. The net effect of this divide- unskilled regional residents struggling with insufficient, stagnating wages on the one hand, and employers grappling with a shortage of skilled workers to drive productivity and growth on the other – is a significant missed opportunity to strengthen our labor market and support our growing economy.

HB 4042 offers an opportunity to help bridge this divide and ensure all residents, and especially those living in areas of concentrated poverty, have an opportunity to fully participate in the region's economic success. HB 4042 offers a unique chance to foster a stronger and more equitable future for the region and the State, and we urge your support.

We know that you value equitable opportunities for the most vulnerable populations in our community. Your consideration and support are much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Branam

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