



February 12, 2019

Representative John Lively, Chair
House Committee on Economic Development
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for the Oregon Growth Fund

Dear Representative Lively and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of the Oregon Growth Fund (OGF) administered by the Innovation & Entrepreneurship (I&E) division of the Oregon Business Development Department. As a business grows, it needs to access larger sums of capital that come with specific expertise or mentoring. The OGF is the provider of this next step capital via funding through entities like angel funds, equity investments serving under-represented entrepreneurs and sectors, and nontraditional lenders serving rural and minority-led businesses. Seed and early-stage capital can be particularly difficult to access for some communities and industries, particularly traditionally underserved populations. The OGF is a critical funding tool to help fill existing Oregon capital gaps for growing businesses.

When I conceived the Oregon Enterprise Blockchain Venture Studio (OEBVS) -- a public/private partnership whose mission is to establish Oregon as a center of excellence for this emerging technology -- the people at Business Oregon and the Oregon Growth Fund were the first to express support for and confidence in the OEBVS concept. Their support, and the subsequent commitment for financial investment, were what allowed me to recruit and secure investment and support commitments from Nike, Intel, Umpqua Bank, Moda Health, Portland State University (PSU), Oregon Health Sciences University, and Smith + Crown. Without their help, this ground-breaking initiative would not have gotten off the ground.

Creating a stable funding source for the Oregon Growth Fund will ensure that private dollars continue to be leveraged, along with expertise provided, to serve Oregon's entrepreneurs. With the recent increase in later stage investors statewide, it is critical that early-stage funding options exist to fill investment pipelines, keeping growing businesses in Oregon, and employing Oregonians. We are solid supporters of the Oregon Growth Board, and urge the Legislature to continue funding the Oregon Growth Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff".

Jeffrey W. Gaus
Founder/Executive In Residence