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April 11, 2019

TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Sen. Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair; Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair, Rep. Dan Rayfield

CC: Speaker Tina Kotek, Senator Tim Knopp, Representative Cheri Helt, Representative Jack Zika, James LaBar, Regional Solutions Director & Policy Advisor for Governor Brown

RE: HB 2055 Establishing the Greater Oregon Housing Accelerator Program
HB 2056 Establishing the Housing Development Grant Program

The Bend Chamber of Commerce represents 1,300+ members employing 25,000 people in Central Oregon. Housing for our workforce has become a critical issue for Central Oregon and Bend, as it has for the entire state. The Bend Chamber supports HB 2055 and HB 2056 to establish the Greater Oregon Housing Accelerator Program and accompanying grant program.

Bend and Central Oregon are one of the most successful business and revenue producers in the state. Primarily made of small businesses, we generate far more job growth per capita than any other region. Like much of the state, the availability of housing continues to be a barrier to growing our workforce due in large part to a lack of inventory of entry to mid-range housing. HB 2055 and HB 2056 provides an opportunity for Bend and Central Oregon employers to access funding and tools to help solve our housing shortage.

HB 2055 will allow for a statewide program to help build more housing in the communities where jobs are available, yet availability is limited. The addition of HB 2056 provides the incentive for employers and communities to invest in housing for their workforce in areas where this is simply financially out of reach, even with a good job.

Thank you for supporting these critical bill, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Katy Brooks, CEO