

Colleagues, as we are all-too-slowly making our way out of this global recession here in Oregon, we need to make sure that we not only get out but stay out. And to do that, we need to grow Oregon's small businesses and grow them into medium and large sized businesses. We need to attract new businesses from out of state and keep them here to anchor our communities. We need to make sure that the jobs that we create are good jobs, family-wage jobs, jobs that can move workers up the ladder to prosperity. And to do all of that we need a skilled workforce, we need trained workforce, we need an educated workforce. And that's why we're bringing before you HB 4141.

I was struck a couple of years ago when I was at a gathering of business leaders and heard a presentation from a member of the Redmond Chamber of Commerce and head of their local economic development team who told us that in his experience businesses looking to relocate in this country look first at two things:

- The stability of the community and
- The quality of the workforce

He urged us to invest heavily in workforce development as the path to future economic growth.

In fact, this state does invest heavily in workforce development, mainly through federal funding streams, in programs all over the state. But what exactly are we getting for this investment? How many workers are able to apply their training directly to real and lasting jobs? How much of this training is occupational, and how much of it is in the “soft” skills of resume writing and interviewing—important, yes, but not enough. How many programs are out there, and which of them should not be out there? That I cannot say.

Colleagues, I'm the co-chair of House Higher Education, I sit on the Oregon Workforce Investment Board, I have taught in the community colleges for 30 years. And colleagues, I couldn't give you the answers to these questions. We simply don't have the kind of accountability that would tell us what's working and what isn't. This bill will get us to the accountability and answers that we need.

I will be the first to say that we have talented, committed, and devoted people doing worker training all over the state, that we have isolated pockets of excellence and short bursts of success. But do we have a coordinated system, a system that works for everyone?

Colleagues,

- I wish I could say that the community colleges and the trade unions and the universities were working hand in hand to develop our workforce, but they're not.
- I wish I could tell you that our workforce development system and our economic development system were working hand in hand, but I cannot.
- I wish I could tell you that our state workforce boards and our local workforce boards were thoroughly aligned, but I cannot.
- I wish I could tell you that all of our communities were skilled worker ready but I cannot.
- I wish I could tell you that our workforce system wasn't a collection of silos but I cannot.

Colleagues, HB 4141 will change that.

If you look at the Whereases in this bill, and the directives that the bill is giving to the Governor and Workforce Investment Board, you'll get a clear sense of the problems that we face and the solutions to those problems that this bill will provoke. We have to squeeze every ounce

of success, every drop of success out of our workforce development system. We simply cannot afford not to.

Colleagues, a year from now I want to be able to stand before you, be able to give you a scorecard, be able to say to you that our workforce development programs have trained this number of workers in Oregon and this number of them have gotten jobs. And these jobs are in these high-priority areas in these parts of the state. That we're on the path to certifying that Parkrose and Maywood Park and Ontario and Klamath Falls are worker ready communities. That small businesses all over Oregon are partnering with the state to get their workers the training that they need to grow. That new companies are coming to Oregon and their reason for doing so is the quality of life in Oregon and the quality of Oregon's workers. To get to that point, we need HB 4141.

Colleagues, I urge you to support this bill.