



February 1, 2016

Hon. Drew Hansen, Chair  
Higher Education Committee  
Washington State House of Representatives  
Olympia, WA

Dear Rep. Hansen:

Thank you for scheduling the hearing for House Bill 2618 enabling port districts to support economic development initiatives tied to workforce development.

For rural communities like ours, a significant barrier to business growth is lack of skilled industrial workers to meet the shifts in the economy and take advantage of industries that are growing. Our community has had four mill closures in the last couple of years. We need to help hardworking unemployed workers and young workers learn the marine trades and composites technical skills to support the areas of our economy that are growing.

The Port of Port Angeles supports this legislation because of the workforce needs of our tenants and other employers in the Port supply chain. Peninsula College provides excellent workforce training in our area, but we have run into obstacles for further collaboration with nonprofits and colleges due to the current RCW restrictions. We need workforce training as an economic development tool. Local investments in workforce training could be used as matching funds for Federal grants to leverage our investments in areas that are needed most.

The Port of Port Angeles Commission recently adopted a Strategic Plan that includes an initiative to “Partner to advance the development and retention of a diversified and skilled workforce within the County.” If adopted, this bill would provide greater ability for the Port to implement this economic development initiative.

HB 2618 clarifies that port districts may voluntarily opt to engage in workforce training activities tied to economic development. This measure will support innovative approaches that will help fill opportunity gaps in Clallam County between our workforce and education systems.

Regards,

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