



January 13, 2020

The Honorable Eli Bebout
The Honorable Bob Nicholas
Joint Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room E201
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Re: Repurpose of Economic Development Funds (Letter #15)

Dear Chairman Bebout, Chairman Nicholas and Members of the Joint Appropriations Committee:

The Wyoming Business Council (WBC) will soon have a new CEO. As you may remember, I have been critical of the Business Council since my time as Treasurer. I have sought to make it a more effective and productive organization. Earlier this year, building on the thoughtful criticisms embedded in various legislative efforts last session, I asked the Business Council to revamp its entire program to bring it back to its original orientation of best-business practices. The Council has undertaken that challenge and I can now say that I am optimistic about its future. More than simply driving the State's efforts for economic diversification, the Business Council must support, attract, and grow existing businesses in a more professional and effective way. Accordingly, the Council must also be held more accountable in how it uses its resources and in understanding what it means to be successful. The new CEO will implement the WBC's refreshed strategic plan, which was created with input gained during public meetings with members of ENDOW, local economic development organizations, business owners, entrepreneurs and communities. A part of the WBC's refreshed strategy is intended to animate ENDOW's 20-year Economic Diversification Strategy.

My goal for the WBC has been to streamline operations, improve its return on investment, and keep its budget flat until it has better proven its value. Some background is important to consider: the passage of Senate File 108 in 2018 formed a \$2,000,000 Agriculture Marketing Sub Account, and Senate File 100 directed \$10,000,000 to form the Broadband Development Sub Account; \$5,000,000 to the Startup: Wyoming Sub Account; and \$6,000,000 was intended to form the Wyoming Research and Innovation Sub Account. As of December 9, 2019 those account balances were \$1,758,202, \$10,000,000, \$2,366,307, and \$6,000,000 respectively.

I request that no further appropriations be made to these sub accounts, but of the \$6,000,000 in the Wyoming Research and Innovation Sub Account, \$300,000 be transferred to the Agriculture Marketing Sub Account, and \$1,700,000 be transferred to the Startup: Wyoming Sub Account. These transfers will provide the WBC the means to implement its new strategic plan.

Additionally, to support Senate File 122, which established the Wyoming Works Program, I request transferring the remaining unobligated \$4,000,000 from the Wyoming Research and Innovation Sub Account to the Wyoming works program account. This program is just getting off the ground and seeks to create educational opportunities and a nimble workforce to support our economy, industry, and workers.

I further request changing language in W.S. 9-12-1404 (a)(i) to allow for use of the Agricultural Marketing Sub Account for components of SF108 to market Wyoming ag products domestically as well as internationally. The change would read:

(i) The agriculture marketing subaccount. Funds within this sub account may be expended as requested by the Wyoming business council and approved by the governor or his designee to provide funding for purposes of W.S. 9-12-109, 9-12-105(a)(vii) and 9-12-106(b).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Gordon', written over a white background.

Mark Gordon
Governor