

Help Supporting Diversity in Business

New effort recruits companies to join cause

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As president of the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon, Jan Mason knows a thing or two about diversity, so she was thrilled to learn about Portland Means Progress, a new program by the city of Portland that encourages businesses to hire minority students, buy from businesses owned by people of color, and create a more diverse workplace and inclusive company culture.

Mason, who is also associate principal and director of marketing at Mackenzie Architecture, knew right away she wanted her firm to get involved because they were thinking along the same lines.

“Outside of this (city effort), we had been looking at our corporate responsibility, looking at how we can improve, and when



Jan Mason of Mackenzie Architecture

we looked at Portland Means Progress, it aligned with what we were doing with our organization,” she said.

Portland Means Progress is a program of Prosper Portland, the city’s economic development agency, and states on its website, portlandmeansprogress.com, that when companies commit diversity in the workplace, it creates wider opportunities for young people and business owners of color, “creating a more equitable economy for all.”

Diversity is also good for business, according to the website, in



PHOTO BY KIM NGUYEN COURTESY PROSPER PORTLAND

Speaker Kim Malek, president and chief executive officer of Salt & Straw, addresses Mayor Ted Wheeler and other attendees during a public session earlier this year to provide information about Portland Means Progress, a city program to help businesses create a more diverse workplace and inclusive company culture.

that purpose-driven companies “outperform their peers in financial returns, customer loyalty and employee satisfaction and retention.”

According to the city, Portland’s youth of color comprise 47 percent of 15 to 19-year-olds, yet many do not have access to op-

portunities for their future.

Several of the Portland Means Progress programs are designed to promote hiring young people from diverse backgrounds, while also asking companies to create internships for underrepresented youths, pay them a minimum of \$15 an hour, and come up with

other plans to create a more diverse workplace and inclusive company culture.

The effort kicked off in March, when 50 local businesses, including Mackenzie, signed on as “early adopters” of the program. So

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