

Thank you for accepting emailed testimony.

My name is Katie Proctor, I own a small comic book store called Books with Pictures in Portland.

I'm writing to say that instability in the future of my ability to do business— not just today but through the rest of this year, or longer— makes giving small business owners the opportunity for loans an insufficient response to this crisis. Emerging from a long period of reduced or shuttered business with a crippling debt load will only push business failure down the road by a month or two. Small business owners need grants, not loans, to weather this storm.

I own my business, but it does not make me wealthy. Like my staff, my personal living expenses are often paid month-to-month, along with the business' expenses. I am not eligible for unemployment or other relief programs directed at workers, but for the duration of this crisis, I need a similar level of support. Please make basic income payments available for ALL Oregonians, outside of the structures of unemployment, so that we can continue to play our vibrant and necessary community roles after this moment has passed.

I own the building that I live and work in, and right now, the building loan is privately held (seller-carried). I do not know if I will be able to pay the loan payment next month, or however many months into the future this goes. I will be approaching him personally for relief, but I would also like to suggest that if the state institutes protections for non-payment of mortgage loans (and I think they should), that they also consider provisions for privately-held property loans like mine. My belief is that there should be a full mortgage freeze (not delay, again, emerging under debt is not a viable option) until people are able to return to work.

Finally, my current plan for my staff is participation in Oregon Work Share as I reduce their hours; if hours are eventually fully cut, they will proceed to full unemployment applications. In these circumstances, anticipating a rise in my unemployment tax rate feels unfairly punitive— I certainly wouldn't let anyone go if I could help it. I propose that employers' UI tax rates are frozen for COVID-19 related layoffs.

Thank you for your time,  
Katie Proctor  
Owner, Books with Pictures, Portland OR

Sent from my iPhone