

To Whom It May Concern,

We are a women-owned independent retailer in Ashland. We have been in business for 47 years and have expanded from one location to four in the last eight years. We provide careers for dozens of people all in our local community.

January & February are by far our slowest months of the year. We all collectively hustled as best we could and our business in 2020 was up 29% in January and then we had a 40% increase in February. Even with the increase we were barely scraping by to pay our bills and employees. Right when business should have been picking up in March, it ended up doing the opposite.

Our town's biggest tourist draw, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival canceled performances starting a week ago and they just announced internally last night that they are completely shutting down for the next 60 days. Our sales have plummeted 52% over the last five days and we fear it will get worse as this situation continues.

Our management had our annual retreat meeting scheduled for last week Thursday to plan our course of action for the coming year. We had to cancel it and lay off eight of our staff instead. We took out an emergency loan from American Express for \$50,000 because we needed the cash instantly. That will help keep us afloat for a bit longer but without any revenue coming in we are at a real risk of our business totally failing.

After the weekend it was clear that we still were in a very precarious position and we laid off another ten of our staff. Half of our staff is now gone in a little under a week. The remaining staff have had their hours/salaries reduced by 40%. We hope to keep running with the bare minimum of employees but even now we are losing money everyday.

Businesses all around us are already closing. Our town may very well not survive this epidemic financially, let alone health wise. We need emergency assistance immediately. We need the Corporate Activity Tax to be suspended. We can not afford to pay another new tax in a time like this. We need the payroll tax suspended. We need our former and current staff to receive paid leave or unemployment benefits now. We need suspension of rent payments that are due to our landlords in two weeks. There is no way we can afford to pay them at this rate. We have already stopped paying our vendors. We are focusing all our remaining funds on supporting our wonderful employees but we can not do it alone. We need help now.

Respectfully,

Joe Collins

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Joe Collins
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