



March 20, 2020

Joint Special Committee On Coronavirus Response  
Governor Kate Brown

Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Honorable Elected Officials,

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and the incredible public health and economic crisis facing our nation, state and local communities. On behalf of our 1,700 business members we are writing to address the enormous economic hardships this pandemic is already causing Oregon's hospitality and tourism industries, and the small businesses that are the very heart of Central Oregon's economy.

The information and stories shared by our industry colleagues at the Special Committee meeting on March 18th is a sobering view of the current scenario. The recent restaurant closure order, while the appropriate measure to take, has had a dramatic impact on our local economy which relies heavily on the hospitality and dining industry. As such the Bend Chamber of Commerce echoes its support for swift and immediate action to help our local businesses. While no ideas are off the table, the following stimulus concepts, developed in conjunction with our local and regional partners, would have a significant impact for our members.

#### **1. Protect the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Fund**

- Invest corporate kicker in UI Fund
- Create immediate access for workers displaced by business closures or downturns
- Eliminate job search requirement, and one-week waiting period
- Eliminate six-month employment requirement for Workshare benefit eligibility

## **2. Address Business Cash Flow Challenges**

- Delay CAT implementation in first quarter; consider second quarter or further delay if crisis continues
- Direct Business Oregon to work with financial institutions to help small businesses get access to low- and no-interest loans and/or payment deferrals

## **3. Address Taxation Issues**

- Delay filing deadlines; allow a temporary (12 month) Unemployment Insurance Tax suspension
- Tax credits for employers who provide additional time off
- Incentives for employers to institute more remote work opportunities

## **4. Address Housing and Food Insecurity**

- Release funds currently held in existing housing funds to help with emergency rental assistance and housing options for homeless Oregonians (outside of warming shelters)
- Support City of Bend request to allocate \$10M to Community Impact Partnership of Oregon (CAPO) and NeighborImpact for rental assistance
- Support City of Bend request to allocate \$5M to CAPO network for food assistance and logistics
- Use Oregon Food Bank network to distribute sanitation supplies to low income households and to expand meal service delivery to older Oregonians.

## **5. Address Small Businesses Challenges**

- Support City of Bend request to allocate \$5M to Neighbor Works America network and/or CDFIs for commercial rental and mortgage assistance, namely for restaurants and hospitality businesses as bridge funding while other options (SBA) are pursued
- Provide access to unemployment and workers compensation for 1099 contractors and sole proprietors.

## **6. Support Healthcare Workers**

- Allocate \$5M to Oregon Health Authority to be used for healthcare worker lodging while on service, as to avoid exposure to family members. This strategy also supports lodging businesses.
- Assess child care needs for health care workers, and establish resource hub with child care providers who have capacity; assess incentives for child care providers willing to participate

## **7. Get funds to businesses and employees immediately**

- We are asking legislators to move forward quickly, within one week, to provide

funding to businesses and employees. Shorten application processes, eliminate wait periods, streamline the immediate dissemination of assistance.

While these are just a few of the numerous solutions on the table, the Bend Chamber of Commerce supports these steps to address immediate challenges faced by our local businesses and community members.

We appreciate your consideration of these ideas, and welcome the opportunity to comment further or provide more information to the Legislature and the Governor's Office.

Be well and best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks", is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Katy Brooks  
President/CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce