



PO Box 616, La Pine OR 97739
541-536-9771 Fax- 541-536-8410
director@lapine.org * www.lapine.org

March 23, 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 300+ 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, and that make up the majority of businesses in the La Pine community.

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. With the current "stay home ~ stay healthy" order, there are now more small businesses closing in our community. Most are sole-proprietorships that cannot avail themselves of unemployment or other temporary help. The La Pine Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly gives it's 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

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

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)
- ~Use Oregon Food Bank network to distribute sanitation supplies to low income households and to expand meal service delivery to older Oregonians.

6. 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 La Pine 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.

Best Regards,

Ann Gawith, Executive Director
La Pine Chamber of Commerce