



June 22, 2020

Joint Interim Committee on First Special Session of 2020  
Senator Peter Courtney, Co-Chair  
Representative Tina Koteck, Co-Chair

Cc: Senator Tim Knopp  
Representative Cheri Helt  
Representative Jack Zika

Dear Senator Courtney, Representative Koteck and committee members,

The Bend Chamber of Commerce, our community partners and the small businesses in Central Oregon thank you and your colleagues for everything you are doing during this unprecedented time. We appreciate the partnership with the business community to re-open Oregon's economy in a safe and prudent manner.

Upon announcement of the First Special Session of 2020, Chamber leadership met to formalize priorities that can help address the unique needs of our community in Central Oregon. As you well know, the City of Bend and the greater Central Oregon region have been extremely hard hit as many of our businesses are reliant on the tourism and hospitality industries. We appreciate the decisions to date of the Emergency Board and look forward to additional local funding to meet our economic recovery challenges.

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- **Local Distribution of Coronavirus Relief Funds:** Over the past several months, both the Chamber and many of its member businesses have innovated new ways to support the local economy. However, innovation alone cannot provide a sustainable path forward. The Chamber, alongside the City of Bend, is ready to implement the ***Bend Business Resiliency Fund***, wherein the Chamber can distribute CRF dollars in the form of grants to local businesses that are developing strategies for resilience and sustainability. We believe the Bend Business Resiliency Fund can be a model for other communities as it combines much needed grant funding with technical support from our local Small Business Development Center and OSU-Cascades to increase the probability of success for recipient businesses.
- **Pause Implementation of Corporate Activities Tax:** Our members are urging a pause in implementing the Commercial Activity Tax (CAT) until at least the start of Q4

in October 2020. We have been vocally concerned about the roll-out and the uncertainty of many aspects of the CAT, however given the current economic climate these concerns have become untenable. Businesses are now faced with economic impact of the closure period, as well as new costs associated with re-opening. Our business community supports the end goal of CAT revenue to fund our state's education needs. But given the current climate, we urge you to use the state's rainy day fund to make good on the obligations to fund education budgets.

- **Temporary and Targeted Liability Relief:** Our local businesses are grateful for the opportunity to re-open their doors safely and within the state guidelines. The current "must-do" activities for retailers, restaurants, hairstylists and other consumer facing businesses are a helpful roadmap, however there are also a significant amount of recommendations and loosely worded suggestions for businesses to follow. This leaves room for interpretation, and we have heard directly from our members that they are fearful of future litigation as a result of COVID.

Oregon has multiple Good Samaritan laws on the books to protect individuals that are providing a service or assisting a fellow citizen in need. These same protections should apply to businesses that are operating in good faith with COVID requirements. We are not suggesting permanent or blanket immunity, but rather temporary and targeted limits to liability for COVID related business decisions. If a business willfully disobeys public health policies, they should absolutely be held responsible. But we encourage policies that support the vast majority of businesses that are trying their best to open their doors in the wake of economic turmoil.

Thank you for your collective efforts thus far during this unprecedented crisis. We are ready to work together with our state and local leaders to continue to move forward and ensure Oregon's communities are healthy and vibrant once again.

Sincerely,

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

Katy Brooks  
CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce