



Before the Joint Interim Committee on The First Special Session of 2020
Waylon Buchan, Oregon Trucking Associations
June 22, 2020

The trucking industry is responsible for transporting nearly 88% of all manufactured freight tonnage in Oregon – roughly 150,514 tons per day. Now, more than ever, Oregonians are reminded of the importance of these timely freight movements, because they allow citizens to safely stay home during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic without forgoing food, medicine, clothing, or other essential goods.

We urge the committee to modify proposed liability protections relating to hotels and motels to include essential businesses continuing to operate under Executive Order 20-12. We feel strongly that the legislature must act now to provide meaningful liability protection for schools, non-profits, local governments, and businesses in order to stave off unwarranted and frivolous lawsuits during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While nearly every facet of modern life has been altered by COVID-19, the trucking industry continues to provide a vital lifeline of critical food and supplies statewide. There is nothing quite like a shortage of necessary goods to drive home the old adage: "If you bought it, a truck brought it."

Our members did not wait until formal regulations were rolled out from the state to protect their workforce. They took it upon themselves to procure, and in many cases fabricate, the personal protection equipment (PPE) required to keep their employees safe. Through their self-reliance and initiative, they manufactured face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, and Plexiglas shielding. They immediately instituted strict social distancing policies and required staff to work remotely wherever possible. They have adhered to state mandates and agency guidance, continually adapting and rising to the challenge at hand.

We are not asking for protections for bad actors. Entities should still be held accountable for gross negligence or their reckless, wanton, or intentional misconduct. However, the companies acting in good faith, complying with state guidelines, and struggling to survive economic freefall deserve protection from the inevitable wave of frivolous lawsuits poised to put them out of business.

In other words, we believe those doing their very best to serve Oregonians during these extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances should not be exposed to retribution or punishment through the legal process once their work is complete. In fact, they deserve peace of mind right now as they continue to provide essential services to Oregonians they have never met.

When the shelves were empty and you needed them the most, the trucking industry came through. Do not let them down. Act today to pass meaningful liability protection for these businesses so they can continue to safely serve Oregon through this pandemic and beyond.