

December 14, 2020

Dear Members of the Joint Committee on the Third Special Session of 2020:

My wife and I own a small cocktail bar in NE Portland called Expatriate. We've made our name in creating a transportive and comfortable environment populated by throngs of people and our ideal expressions of cocktails, food, and service. It has always been a distinctive, special place, something we were proud of, one that guests from around the world and just down the street could agree was worth a visit. Over the lifespan of the business, we employed over a hundred people, more than a few of which have gone on to open businesses of their own. We have proudly been of Portland and for Portland.

All of this work took place in a rather small room of eight hundred square feet, so in mid-March we closed our doors just prior to Kate Brown's initial order out of concern for our employees and community. Three weeks prior, we'd been nominated for a James Beard award for Outstanding Bar Program in the nation. Of course, this sort of recognition involves selling a fair amount of cocktails. It is our livelihood. We were elated, and then shocked a short time later, as all Portland bars were, with no possibility of our doing the job we're meant to do. Very suddenly, we furloughed a dozen employees and didn't serve a thing for eight months. As a business, Expatriate had never been closed for any longer than a few days in seven years of operation.

We've recently reopened three nights a week serving food to go, and for delivery. As a business that formerly did 2/3 of its business in cocktails, the adjustment isn't smooth, of course. The response to the food has been robust, and we're grateful for the business, but the totals, at best, have been 1/3 of our former numbers. We haven't been able to employ our bartenders. As an establishment focused so intently on cocktails, this isn't a viable long-term option. Any business in the state of Oregon that depends on on-premise liquor sales for the majority of their revenue is in the exact same position. It is one of near extinction. We, and all bars in Oregon, are asking for a lifeline.

Please allow us to serve cocktails to go.

Your response to this request will determine the future of hundreds of bars across the state, and ours. During the shutdown, we learned that we were finalists for the James Beard award (Top five in the nation). We haven't been able to make a cocktail since. Please help us survive the pandemic by doing what we do best. Cocktails to go are legal in Washington, California, the District of Columbia, and 31 other states. It would be a godsend to be granted the opportunity to survive, for our bar, and all the others.

Thanks for reading,
Kyle Linden Webster & Naomi Pomeroy