

Dear Co-Chairs President Courtney & Speaker Tina Kotek, Co-Vice Chairs Sen. Girod and Rep. Drazen, members of the Committee,

My name is Sushmita and I am an entrepreneur, small business owner, artist and a civic leader in Washington County. I am also a tenant. Small businesses are struggling. We all know that. But those individuals that have brick and mortar locations have double rents and expenses. Not all businesses can be wrapped up and taken home. There is no capacity or way to even close quickly. It would take strategy and planning. I rent 2500 sq ft. space where we have a heritage boutique and a studio filled with hand crafted products collected over the last 12 years. We have not received support for rent for it so that we could worry about earning a livelihood. For the last 10 months I have done all I could to save my business because the hopes of many are tied to it. In that fight with minimal support how was I to earn for my home rent and expenses. Plus I have to take care of my family that lives in another country who are also impacted by the pandemic. We need rent cancellation. But since that is not happening we need a moratorium so that we can come up with a strategy and plan how to address this. If landlords are losing income so have the people. Plus tenants don't have equity. Landlords will still build equity based on the current trend. Why should tenants be the ones to always bear the brunt. Yes there will always be those few bad apples on the tenant side and those good ones on the landlord side. It's unfortunate. Thus it is important to extend support to landlords to ensure that an unnecessary financial burden is not being dumped on them either. But if they have a choice to apply or not then it becomes a problem for the tenant. If the money directly goes to landlords what is preventing them from selling the property and thus ensuring eviction? A lot of property managers don't even inform the tenants that they have received funds. The process must be transparent and come with assurance that the property manager can't sell property, or evict thus leaving the tenant out in the cold. The moratorium must extend to micro businesses that have brick and mortar because while we struggle to drum up a livelihood, when there is NO business happening there is no way we can pay rents. We have the inventory and expertise to survive. But the economy is just not functioning. Speaking on behalf of them: "We also have families, deaths, children, partners, previous business loans, expenses, personal health issues etc. How many more burdens should we bear while we are being asked to pivot and try new things. It feels relentless. Not all of us are experts in accounts, finances but we can't even hire people because we don't have money for rent. We keep getting told that you will get support if you have employees. But without the business where will we keep employees? So first we must save the business itself....right?" Small businesses did not take the risk they did for handouts, charity and free money. (We know which ones do that). We just want hope and assurance that we have support, while we ride out this rough period and emerge stronger and not so fatigued. Engage us. Involve us. We will come up with an equitable solution for most. But please implement a moratorium for now. On renters for residence and commercial who have been impacted. ALSO while our people are dying from disease is it right and just for someone to expect me to talk about pretty clothes and jewelry. I feel such distaste when I have to ask people to spend money on things when people are hungry. My soul hurts every time I do that, and I feel like I am not serving humanity. Help me feel better about being human by ensuring that I don't have to worry about a roof over my business and a roof over my family, so I can continue to advocate and support our community in all ways possible. Where is space for healing and addressing trauma? **This moratorium is not just for rent relief. It is trauma relief.** Let's give our community time to catch their breath, hold their loved ones close, come together, heal, bond, and just be. Stop-gap measures never lead to anything good. We have a chance to be an example of what people over policy can look like. Let's be that state. Let's cut anything unnecessary and come up with innovative solutions to keep people safe and content rather than constant hunger games. We, your community, are looking for compassion, care and concern

and we believe that all of you will ensure we can sleep better..... knowing that we are in caring hands Thank You.

Regards,

**-Sushmita**

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*Civic Leader*

*Founder & Owner*

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