

Esteemed members of the Oregon Legislature,

Thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented and challenging times for our state. Springfield Chamber board of directors, members, and staff are working every day to ensure that our businesses, employees, and families emerge from this crisis a stronger community. As the legislature convenes in special session, we seek your support for policies that will help us weather the difficult months ahead.

Today, I write to express our support for an amendment to HB 4212 that would provide temporary and targeted liability protections to entities that are following state and federal public health guidelines and rules to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Here is why:

- *Our businesses, for profits and not-for profits, public and private employers have expressed repeated concerns that although they take steps to fully comply with public health guidelines, they may still suffer costs of unwarranted legal claims.* Even the thought of potential risk can be a barrier to reopening as just one lawsuit could force a business to close its doors for good, even if the courts were to rule in their favor.
- Targeted liability protection will ensure that employers *who are following best practices and state-issued public health guidelines* don't suffer further economic harm from crippling lawsuits. They are not a license for any employer to intentionally ignore workplace safety.
- *The introduction of LC 68 increases our cause for concern.* LC 68 appears to be an ill-timed attempt to target specific industries for increased costs and liability precisely when they need relief. This policy risks undermining that which we've repeatedly appealed for as a critical need for business and our local communities' recovery.
- In order to move forward through a smooth, safe and healthy return to work, our community will depend on successfully *building consumer, worker, and public confidence.* We believe that employer liability protections will bring certainty, credibility, trust, and fairness; *assurances needed and deserving of employers who are in compliance, providing a safe worker and customer experience even as they invest resources into retooling to keep their doors open, their business operating, and their employees on the payroll.*

We have worked hand-in-hand and in good faith with public health officials to promote all state and county public health guidance while simultaneously assisting with economic relief to businesses and families through the crisis. And yet, our hardest work lies ahead. We ask you to give thorough consideration to temporary and targeted liability protections that will shield local businesses from legal risk when they are following state public health guidelines to protect employees and customers from the novel coronavirus.

Respectfully,



Vonnie Mikkelsen
President and CEO

Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Fostering a prosperous community by strengthening, representing, and promoting business



Ph: 541.746.1651 Fax: 541.726.4727

Email: vonnie@springfield-chamber.org

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [The Bottom Line News](#)

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