

Testimony regarding LC10 cocktails to-go and third party delivery app commission caps

To Whom it May Concern,

I want to start by saying thank you to Governor Brown for calling a special session to discuss the the dire circumstances Oregon restaurant owners and workers find ourselves in. Thank you to the legislative body for meeting on such short notice during the holiday season. Your efforts are appreciated.

My name is Chelsea Dunn. I've been working in restaurants here in Oregon for the last eleven years. This week, I was given the upsetting news that long-time Oregon family-owned McGrath's Fish House had to permanently close their Milwaukie restaurant where I have worked as a server, bartender, and part-time manager for the last eight and a half years. I can't say I'm surprised to see it, but I am deeply saddened to find myself, my coworkers, and my managers unemployed, not just temporarily laid-off, right before Christmas. Since the decision was made in March to close down parts of the economy due to Covid 19, I was afraid that this was a possibility. In hindsight, it feels as if its been a nine-month-long process of ripping off a band-aid. The federal assistance that helped us keep our doors open in the spring has long been exhausted, and the recent freeze and subsequent weeks of extreme-risk closure of our dine-in facilities has left us without legs to stand on.

I question the effectiveness of closing indoor dining in the fight against this virus, but I am not a scientist, nor an elected official. It may be considered above my pay grade to weigh in on such matters. Slowing the spread of Covid 19 is undoubtedly crucial, but to force restaurants to change their business models once again without financial assistance is unreasonable and will surely result in more small businesses shuttering forever. In order to help alleviate the stress on businesses, the state must pass emergency legislation that would allow restaurants with OLCC status to sell cocktails to-go. Alcohol sales have a higher profit margin than food, and this change would help these businesses bring in a much-needed boost in revenue.

Furthermore, delivery apps like Grubhub and Doordash must not be allowed to predatorily cut into profits, and must have limits placed on their commissions. As it stands, restaurants that partner with these apps to reach a wider clientele are barely making back the cost of the food. This must not be allowed to continue.

My restaurant was a fixture of the Milwaukie community, and a particular favorite among the retirement age. Restaurants were struggling to keep up with the rising minimum wage requirements before Covid, and I am scared to think that this may be the last nail in the coffin of more small businesses before this crisis is over. I know that this is not the future Oregonians want. Please do the right thing and allow restaurants to maximize their profits if they must be forced to operate at the diminished capacity that to-go only and outdoor-only dining in December entails. Please pass legislative action allowing cocktails to-go, and enact limits on commissions taken by third-party delivery apps. It is too late to save my job and my restaurant, but its not too late to take steps to help struggling businesses now. Give the restaurant industry in Oregon a hand and help pull us above the surface again. We are drowning.

Respectfully,

Chelsea Dunn