

## Special Session Testimony

Saturday, December 19, 2020

Thank you for taking my submission. I am grateful to Governor Brown, Senate President Peter Courtney, and the Oregon State Legislature for making this session possible. My name is Liz Hanna and I own Mad Hanna, a small dive bar in the Cully neighborhood in Portland. This is my story.

When we were all ordered closed from mid-March to mid-June to 'flatten the curve,' I hoped that some invisible governmental timer had started; that there was a plan for families and businesses stored safely somewhere that would give us direction and help us feel safe. The service industry was struggling at an unparalleled degree. I assumed, because we were told to expect a second wave by every scientist on every TV station there is, that all levels of government would be preparing for it. We were talking about legalizing to-go cocktails then when a special session was not necessary to call. What happened? Bars and restaurants were the first and hardest hit industry, the ripples of which will be felt for years and yet there was a simple and attainable option to help us help ourselves: legalizing to-go cocktails. What happened? My staff and I started preparing immediately for a second shutdown while triaging the first one. We researched, planned, made phone calls, wrote emails, and debated bankers and loan officers. We took every grant, loan, or subsidy we found. I wrote letters and advocated for my employees. I attended Zoom meetings and comforted friends by FaceTime. Every cent of my savings went to keeping my home and feeding my children. Stimulus checks arrived and since I made \$2000 more than the 2019 cutoff, my check was around \$400. My autistic, 20-year-old twin sons were still in the PPS system at the time but no longer legally my dependents, and were in job training and had never taken a paycheck, so I guess they don't count? Because they got nothing. \$400 for three people does not even begin to cover bills. But that is a complaint for a different session.

Reopening mid-June was like starting my business from scratch but intensely harder because all the rules changed. We were building the plane as it was taking off and it was chaotic and stressful to say the least. Rather than wait for specific directions we felt may never come, my business partner and I sat down with our staff and discussed what measures we, Mad Hanna, needed to have in place to ensure the safety of our staff. We felt that protecting them first would ensure the safety of our patrons at the same time. We reopened to operate at 50% capacity, bringing in 25-30% of the money we made in 2019, and we needed to employ one extra person for safety and sanitation. We were grateful to be in on the first round of PPP money, however it was not updated with reasonable terms until about 2 weeks before its expiration date, so we had been *Brewster's Millions*-ing and trying to spend it all before we were allowed to reopen. I had been paying my employees for cleaning and recleaning an already spotless but unopened bar bringing no revenue in. No one knew what to do otherwise. We felt forgotten and rudderless. We received the SBA EIDL and it was gone in 4 months. Paying a living wage, covering health insurance, the cost of overhead, but only taking in 30% of last year's sales meant we needed a tourniquet when we were handed a band-aid. To-go cocktails could have been that tourniquet.

October arrived fast. The plan we had begun developing at the start of the shutdown was to open a grocery store and pantry in the storefront adjacent to Mad Hanna. We pulled the trigger on this project in May but had been unable to move forward with it for months because the pandemic and fires and protests left Portland completely unprepared to serve permits in a timely manner. I cried in frustration on a Zoom with Chair Kafoury because Urban Forestry, the last hurdle, taking weeks to review our plans and I couldn't for the life of me understand why! I digress. We did not get the permit we applied for in early June until November 25th. The second shutdown started November 18. Knowing that we were in danger of never reopening, we decided to immediately pivot the inside of Mad Hanna to the pantry, grocery and gift shop meant for the next door down. Our employees literally volunteered their time to help us set up, neighbors came over to help move the pool table. We were almost completely out of money. It felt like that moment in *It's A Wonderful Life* when George and his family are holding dollars and staring at the clock, waiting on tenterhooks for the end of the business day. Being allowed to reopen for on-premises sales on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and keep our patio open until 11pm brought palpable relief. This winter was not unexpected. This surge was not unexpected. What's unexpected is how very unprepared we are to survive it. The service industry in 2020 has had two months of regular business in the slowest first months of the year. Since then we have been closed for three and a half months and allowed to operate at half capacity for six and a half. My business rang in over three quarters of a million dollars in sales in 2019. This year? We

will be lucky to break \$300,000. There has always been a simple way we can begin to recover from this loss: legalizing to-go cocktails.

Please know that as frustrated I get I am deeply and sincerely full of gratitude. Mad Hanna is only operational today because of the resilience, the compassion, the support, the commitment to safety, and the passion of the people who are the community here. You, our representatives, are our community too, fight for us the way my community does. This year, I have felt deeply and awfully disappointed by the government that is meant to support and protect us in tumultuous and unprecedented times. I believe in hard work, self-advocacy, and making your own luck, and it is by these principals that I run my business and lead my family. I expected my government to be prepared for winter because I was prepared for winter, but you were not. Now the spirits being served in Portland will be the ghosts of the businesses failed by unpreparedness and inaction. I wish you had listened to us earlier. I wish you had heard the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association, National Restaurant Alliance, Independent Restaurant Alliance sooner. I wish the psychiatric nurses who I know left you messages about the impact on the mental health of restaurant and bar workers and the public not having a safe outlet, had been understood. If wishes and butts were candy and nuts, we'd all have a Merry Christmas. I wish you had listened to me before it was too late for so many bars and restaurants.

We have a saying in the Hanna family: How do you spell luck? W-O-R-K. We worked. Mad Hanna took what we had, what was given to us, and what we borrowed, and we pushed and pushed until we made it work. We were very, very, lucky. We could not afford to wait until someone told us what we could do. Not everyone has as supportive a community and family as I do. Whether they are related by blood but far away on the other side of the country, or the chosen and intentional community in Cully, my family has been my source of inspiration and the driving force that keeps me fighting. Goonies never say die. I would beg, borrow, and steal for them, but I'd rather just be allowed to earn an honest living and support them the way they have supported me. I cannot afford to, and therefore will not, look back and live in resentment for things that were or were not done. We must keep pushing and pushing until we make this work. We need to make this work because it does not matter how hard I work or how much I push, unless cocktails are legalized to-go, we will not be able to even begin to recoup the cost of this heinous year. Please, please legalize to-go cocktails. Help us help ourselves.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth J Hanna

Mad Hanna

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