



February 18, 2021

Dear Chair Manning and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to write today to express our support for SB 531.

The Oregon State Chamber of Commerce represents 86 local chambers of commerce and more than 27,000 local businesses from every corner of the state. These local businesses are the life-blood of their communities and Oregon's economy.

With the onset of COVID-19, Governor Brown issued Executive Order 20-12, which shuttered many of our local businesses in the interest of protecting public health and slowing the spread of this virus. These closures resulted in many businesses suffering extensive losses.

We have heard from our local chambers about the impact these closures have had on their business communities. Businesses that were once growing and looking at adding employees are now wondering if they will be able to remain open at all. Restaurants and gyms have invested thousands of dollars in safety precautions, only to be unable to open their doors. We heard from one small business along the coast who opened just six months before the pandemic forced them to close. Because they didn't have 2019 financials, they were not even eligible for any of the COVID grants. The list goes on and on.

The ripple effect of a business closure is far reaching. Each time a business is forced to shut down, vital employees are lost. It can take months to rehire and retrain new employees when they can open again, only to be lost once again when there is another closure. These workers are falling into a failed unemployment system. This only adds to economic troubles when families are unable to pay their rent or buy necessities.

When businesses are closed due to public health emergencies like COVID-19, it is important that the state help those businesses recover. Oregon's economy relies on our small and mid-sized businesses, those who have shouldered the greatest weight of these closures. It is important for these businesses to be made whole, which is why we support SB 531.

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SB 531 would allow businesses to be reimbursed for closures made during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses sacrificed their livelihoods in order to protect the health of Oregonians. In turn, we should help these businesses - and the jobs they provide - survive.

We hope you will stand with businesses in this state and support SB 531.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gioia Goodrum".

Gioia Goodrum
OSCC Board Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JL Wilson".

JL Wilson
OSCC Legislative Counsel