

February 23, 2021

Dear Chair Power & Members of the House Subcommittee on Civil Law,

I am writing to you today to urge you to support HB 2638. This bill would provide businesses, both large and small, with essential limited liability protections against any act or omission taken during the COVID-19 emergency period.

For nearly one year, COVID-19 has shaken up our entire community, dealing residents and businesses unprecedented challenges never before imagined. The majority of Oregon businesses, regardless of size, have been forced to change and adapt the way they operate their day-to-day business in an effort to stay afloat. Many of the implemented government mandates, focused on customer and employee safety, have forced businesses to invest heavily in making their worksite sanitary and safe, and truly altering daily operations in magnitude. We are blessed with a business community that is nimble and flexible, but it has not been without severe casualties during this process. Oregon has lost many family-owned main street businesses over the last eleven months, never to reopen again. Those able to adapt and quickly assimilate to the many safety mandates, while also staying viable as companies, are optimistic that a brighter future awaits them in 2021. The very economic foundation in Oregon depends on business success across the state. True to form, many businesses have found a way to navigate the new COVID-19 marketplace, knowing that their operations could again be changed at a moment's notice. Providing wins for Oregon's business community does not always need to come in forms of grants or low interest loans, but from a lens of partnership with the very state government directly safety mandates on behalf of customers and employees.

In the December 21st third special session, the Oregon Legislature provided limited liability protections for both private and public schools to ensure safety from potentially harmful lawsuits. It is now time that our elected officials recognize the need for equitable small business protections to match those provided to our public sector partners in education. Protecting the very fabric which allows our business community the opportunity to produce paychecks and expand opportunities for employment across the state is at its most vital point in time. I could not more adamantly advocate for the limited liability protections within HB 2638. The future of Oregon businesses is at stake. Our local small businesses could be at risk of paying out for damages associated with an unprecedented pandemic, even though every single protection measure was implemented to protect our customers and employees, so we could keep people safe AND employed during this challenging time.

Please provide businesses with essential and equitable protections which the Oregon Legislature has already provided both public and private schools across the state. Now is the time to act and show our Oregon businesses that you stand with them and need their successes to insure Oregon's healthy economic future.

Protect small business and vote 'YES' on HB 2638.

Respectfully,

Tom Hoffert
Chief Executive Officer
Salem Chamber of Commerce

Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

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