

Representative Nosse,

I am writing to you in order to express how grateful we all are for the help we've received from the State of Oregon during the pandemic. It was a tremendous help for venues and arts institutions. However, these funds have run out and 2022 started off much worse than we all anticipated.

I understand that it's impossible to predict the uncertainty of Covid...but I can explain our situation as of today.

Volcanic Theatre Pub closed the 1st week of March of 2020. We've remained closed for most of the last two years now. We attempted to open with some small local events in the summer of 2021, but Covid cases and attendance just made it impossible to operate safely. In addition, the increased costs to operate made it even more difficult to break even. Most events that we did host were a loss. Touring began to pick up in the Fall of 2021 with hopes we could operate at limited capacity and host some events safely. Enter Delta! Most of the shows in the Fall of 2021 were cancelled due to risk of infection or artists cancelling. We had already spent money on promotion and added those to the already massive losses. The events that did occur were losses due to increased expenses and low attendance. Once Delta began to decrease, we saw a glimmer entering winter. Enter the highly contagious Omicron! Touring was cancelled again and Volcanic closed again. As we navigate into February and Spring, we're hanging on by a thread. If events and attendance don't increase soon, it's very likely we won't make it through the summer.

Bend and Deschutes County has been hit particularly hard. I'm not sure why our numbers were so high during the pandemic, but I do know that it was impossible to open safely, and attendees were not comfortable going indoors.

Volcanic is the top spot for national, regional, and local artists to perform in Central Oregon. We typically do 250+ events a year. 2022 is already down 73% of what we would have in a normal year. Omicron isn't done with us, and we certainly expect another variant. In addition to new variants, indoor venues have a difficult time competing with the great outdoors here. We rely heavily on Winter and Spring events before outdoor events and activities become more frequent. We cannot compete with the outdoors and Covid at the same time. It's an impossible task unless we get some relief.

In short, this industry has been hit harder than most industries. The economic devastation is far-reaching. The trauma, isolation, grief, and anxiety are overwhelming. It's crucial that arts institutions like Volcanic are still here when we all begin to recover from the pandemic. Community artistic gatherings have always been vital for any community. But, now more than ever, we must be here when things look safe again. We must be here to help in the healing of the past two years. We must be able to provide for our community.

Please support HB4040 so venues can all make our communities a bright spot when we all eventually begin to recover from Covid-19 and its everlasting consequences.

Thank you,

Derek Sitter

President/Volcanic Theatre Pub