

Jan 29, 2023

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature-

I am writing in regards to House Bill 2459. I am the co-founder/co-owner of the Goodfoot Lounge in Portland and am urging you to allocate the \$50 million and support the arts and entertainment industry in the state.

The effects of the long and state mandated covid closure continue to be felt by businesses and employees of this vital industry. Twice since the mandates were lifted we were forced back into mini-closures (Delta variant wave in September 2021 and the ensuing Omicron wave of December-January 2022), costing us large chunks of revenue and leading to the loss of both staff and momentum. While these subsequent closures were not state-mandated and were driven by artist and staff cancellations, as well our own concern for public health, they put us back on our heels just as we were starting the arduous climb back to full operations.

We have been in business 22 years this February and for the first 19 years had remarkably low staff turnover— our employees were secure in their jobs, performed them well and made a living wage. The state mandated closures led to virtually all of our hourly staff moving on to other jobs, from management to production crew, bar staff to promotions, people went to industries that were allowed to operate while we sat idle.

Upon the re-open, the labor market shifted and we had to compete for far less qualified staff at fairly significantly higher wages with continual turnover at a time when our revenues are reduced by smaller attendance at our events. We are confident that our hard work and persistence will pay off and we can rebuild towards better days as the threat of covid recedes, but now is not the time pull back support.

When we opened our venue on SE Stark St in February 2001, there weren't too many thriving businesses in the immediate area. However, as we built a successful business we saw a bar/restaurant and a pizzeria both open on the block (and they both remain there) while successful bars, cafes and businesses soon sprang up around the corner and down towards Burnside St. By bringing hundreds of patrons out for shows every week we brought patrons with money to the block, making the area far more attractive for other businesses. In short, we feel that we, like many other art and performance venues, are anchors in our neighborhood— both from a financial and human/cultural/community

perspective. With your support we can continue to be so while employing dozens of staff members and independent contractors, as well as artists across many genres. We appreciate your previous support and thank you in advance for continuing to see the economic and cultural value of our industry.

All the best,

Neil Leeborg

