

Testimony in Opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 77

Chairperson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Oregon Senate Bill 77, which seeks to impose new restrictions on home-based businesses, particularly those operating in rural areas. I am writing to express my strong opposition to this bill, as its provisions would significantly harm small business owners, limit economic opportunities, and introduce unnecessary complexity into the home occupation process.

While I understand the need for land use regulations and the importance of preserving the character of rural communities, the proposed restrictions in SB 77 go too far. This bill would not only affect businesses operating on farm and forestland but also impose new limitations on home occupations within urban growth boundaries, disrupting a broad range of small businesses across the state. Below are my key concerns with this bill:

1. Restriction of Property Rights and Economic Freedom

Small businesses are a vital part of Oregon's economy, particularly in rural areas. Many residents rely on home occupations to supplement their income and provide essential services. SB 77 would severely limit the types of businesses that could be operated from home, particularly on farm and forestland, and impose restrictions on advertising and customer outreach. These restrictions infringe upon the rights of business owners to operate and grow their businesses in a way that suits their needs, potentially threatening their livelihoods.

2. Unclear and Overly Complex Regulations

The bill, as drafted, introduces new, unclear, and potentially unenforceable restrictions on home occupations. For example, limitations on the number of customers that can visit a home business, and the type of advertising permitted, are overly prescriptive and difficult to enforce. These vague regulations would create confusion for small business owners, local authorities, and the public, leading to unnecessary administrative burdens and potential legal challenges. Small businesses already face numerous challenges; adding more red tape will only make it harder for them to succeed.

3. Negative Economic Impact on Rural Communities

Home-based businesses in rural areas are a lifeline for many families. They provide income, create jobs, and contribute to the local economy. By imposing new limitations on what types of

businesses can operate on farm and forest land, SB 77 could force many small businesses to shut down or relocate, reducing the economic vitality of rural areas. In many cases, these small businesses operate in industries like agriculture, crafts, or remote consulting—fields that are particularly reliant on the flexibility and low overhead of a home-based operation. Restricting these businesses would not only harm the business owners but also the local economies and communities that depend on their success.

4. Inconsistent and Disruptive for Urban and Rural Home Occupations

The bill applies new restrictions on home occupations in all zones, including urban growth boundaries. This would create an inconsistent regulatory environment where home businesses in rural areas are treated differently than those in urban areas. Small business owners within urban growth boundaries would be subject to restrictions that may not be appropriate for their area, further complicating the regulatory landscape and making it difficult for home businesses to navigate the rules.

5. Disproportionate Impact on Low-Income and Rural Oregonians

Many individuals in rural areas rely on home occupations as a means of economic mobility and financial security. The restrictions proposed by SB 77 could disproportionately affect these low-income and rural residents, who may have fewer options for alternative sources of income. By limiting the ability to advertise, control customer traffic, and the types of businesses allowed, the bill would disproportionately harm those who rely on these small businesses to make a living and provide for their families.

Conclusion

I strongly urge the committee to reject Senate Bill 77 in its current form. The proposed restrictions would stifle economic opportunity, increase confusion and regulatory burdens, and harm small business owners, especially in rural areas. Instead of tightening restrictions on home-based businesses, I encourage the committee to consider more targeted solutions that strike a balance between responsible land use and supporting the livelihoods of small business owners across Oregon.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my concerns. I respectfully ask that you vote against SB 77.

Sincerely,

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