



February 18, 2021

Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Thomsen and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 531: Relating to compensation for losses due to emergency closures. On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,700 business members, we thank the Legislature for all that you are doing to support our local communities across the state during the pandemic.

Small businesses are the heart of our community in Bend and in many other cities and towns across the state. We have heard first hand the struggles of small business owners — the restaurants that have endured months' long closures and laid off or furloughed staff; the gyms and indoor recreation facilities unable to open to even small numbers of customers yet continue to have fixed costs for rent and utilities; the tourism and hospitality industry that has been decimated during their high season. The list goes on as every aspect of our economy has been and continues to be impacted by the pandemic and related closures.

SB 531 is an acknowledgment of these businesses that has been most impacted. Additionally, minority and small businesses have borne the brunt of the impacts of COVID-19 because they often have little or no savings and leveraged their personal assets and homes to run their businesses. While most businesses will not bring a lawsuit before the state for COVID-19 related closures, SB 531 permits that activity and furthermore offers a vehicle to highlight the hardships endured by our local businesses.

We understand the shared role that businesses have in promoting public health practices to stop the spread of COVID-19, and our business members have actively followed the prescribed protocols. However, now is the time to support our business community and recognize the important role they have played in slowing the spread.

We respectfully request a yes vote on SB 531.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Katy Brooks
President + CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce

Creating an environment where businesses, their employees and our community excel together through collaboration, advocacy, resources and leadership to meet Bend's business challenges.