

3/22/2021

Dear Friends,

I'm Jeff Martin, and I'd like to share a few thoughts on HB 3376. That's not the most thrilling introduction, I know. I promise this note will get better.

For the past nine years, it's been my pleasure to own and operate the Joy Cinema and Pub in Tigard. Quite obviously, I have a stake in whether or not this passes. I'm sure that other theater owners can say it more clearly and more convincingly than I can, but when they tell you that we need money, they're right. So, for the part of this that benefits me, I'd just ask that you consider what they say regarding the financial hardship of having been closed for a year. It's absolutely true, and it applies to all of us.

But even if I take my needs out of the equation, I offer my most emphatic, enthusiastic support for this bit of legislation. In supporting this, you have a chance to help save businesses that are at the very heart of the neighborhoods and communities in which they live. A movie theater - especially one that's independently owned and operated - brings life and culture to our cities and towns. It brings art, history and entertainment. It's a gathering place that draws people out of their homes for a shared, communal experience. It drives couples, friends and families to nearby shops and restaurants and revs up the economies of entire neighborhoods. And, unlike so many institutions in our current culture, *it unites us*. We disagree on politics. We get mad at a relative who votes for a different candidate than we do. We fight over things we shouldn't. But we all, nearly without exception, love that little theater in the town or neighborhood where we grew up. We agree that it was magical.

That theater - in a bigger city or a smaller town - pulled off a trick that no TV or computer screen ever will. It brought us together. It may well be the one business that's as vital to a community as a public library, but it also generates jobs and revenue and, because we need to be practical, tax dollars. For a good show in my theater, we may sell a hundred tickets. I'd guess that a good third of our customers eat dinner at a nearby restaurant before or after the movie. Please remember that, if it weren't for the theater, these people would most likely be sitting home watching TV. I'm sure this is true for nearly every cinema. And, if you're on the fence where this legislation is concerned because you don't see how the aforementioned magic applies to a big, corporate multiplex, forget the magic for them. And look instead at the

economics of what they do. They bring *thousands* of people out on a good night. And that same one third of their customers is going out to a nearby restaurant to grab dinner before the show or dessert afterward. These big theaters may not have the romance of a small cinema, but they're a godsend to nearby businesses. And they employ a great number of people. They create jobs.

As I mentioned earlier, I do want to leave the points of the economic impact of the COVID closure primarily to my colleagues. There are simply better businessmen and businesswomen in this trade who can address this better than I. But I *can* tell you that, due to the closure directed by the State, we've had to lay off all employees, we've suspended orders with local vendors, and we've suspended any services that aren't absolutely necessary. We haven't contributed to the economy in the way we typically do. We've had to put maintenance of our equipment on the back burner. And I haven't paid myself anything for a solid year. Of all the businesses on our stretch of 99W, we were - to my knowledge - the *only one* that was not allowed to operate until just a couple of weeks ago. Even now, we can't hire back employees until we're more certain that there won't be another lockdown. Our sales are only a small fraction of what they'd normally be. (This has to do with adhering to the States guidelines for reopening and, in fact, limiting our capacity to significantly fewer guests than we're allowed. We do this for the safety of our guests, of course, but also because we need to remain a one-person operation until we can realistically re-hire employees.) The economic impact of the closures has indeed been devastating. We did what the State of Oregon told us to do, but it's driven us to the brink of collapse.

So yes. Of course I hope you'll support theaters and vote for HB 3376. Of course I have a financial stake in this. But there are so many good, hardworking people in Oregon who don't own theaters but who will suffer if theaters fade into history. This is one rare chance to support legislation that truly enriches the communities in which Oregonians live and happens to make great fiscal sense, too. Saving our cinemas and giving them the chance to thrive - after a full year in which the State of Oregon told them they weren't allowed to operate - is the right move both ethically and economically.

I thank you for taking the time to read this. If I can clarify any of the above, please feel free to call me at 503 901-5993.

Most Sincere Thanks,
Jeff Martin
The Joy Cinema and Pub