

Chair Lively, Vice-chairs, and members of the committee:

As a Salem resident for 3 decades, I see what a community resource we have in the Salem Cinema. And for the first time in those 30-plus years, I'm starting to imagine what a gap it would leave in our community if we were to lose this 39-year-old business because it couldn't survive the pandemic.

While this pandemic has impacted everyone to some degree, businesses like theaters are uniquely impacted, and it's a brutal impact. Other businesses had to limit capacity, change operations, and instill safety measures to continue operating. Theaters didn't have that option. And now, after many months of being shut down, even reopening will provide little relief, because they'll be operating about about 50% capacity.

The pandemic has created gigantic budget holes for these businesses, and under current guidelines they'll be trying to refill those holes with teaspoons instead of shovels. They need help.

The communities need this help as well. Not only do we need the businesses to continue to be here for the people whose jobs depend on them, but when this pandemic is over and we gradually return to daily life, we'll need the familiar routines, like a Friday-night movie, to truly be normal and vibrant communities again.

I urge your support HB 3376 and I thank you for your consideration.
Michelle Blake