

Dear Chairman Golden and Committee Members:

I submit this public testimony as a concerned businessperson and property owner who resides in Oregon. The last qualifier of that sentence – “resides in Oregon” – is an important addition. A cursory review of the already-submitted public testimony shows deep involvement of out-of-state interests, which should raise concerns as to whether this is A) sound policy-making in response to an imminent and demonstrable public hazard, or B) questionable policy-making under the auspices of dubious connections to the COVID-19 pandemic. I respectfully submit that option B is the correct answer.

One might say, “why do we care about the state shutting down mink farms? There are only 11 left in Oregon.” To that, I would rephrase the question to replace “mink farms” with any other line of business with any possible connection to the spread of disease. Why hasn't the state ordered convenience stores to shut down? Convenience stores sell cigarettes, which cause cancer, and fatty processed foods, which have been strongly linked to diabetes, cancer, obesity, and a general state of unwellness. Why doesn't the state shut down swimming pools? They can harbor e.Coli if an occupant defecates in the pool. What about bars and restaurants that serve alcohol? Alcohol has been linked to impaired driving, diabetes, depression, domestic violence, self-harm, high blood pressure, liver disease, and at least a dozen other poor outcomes that would make this sentence longer than it already is.

We care for one simple reason: if the state can mandate the shutting down of mink farms based on a flimsy connection with COVID-19, then what's next? What industry is next to be ordered closed because it is “out of line”?

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of this proposed legislation is the fact that generations-old businesses can be decreed “illegal”, with no compensation to the aggrieved business owners. This must be changed in this legislation. If the state is to use eminent domain powers to shutter these businesses in the name of public interest, then it must compensate the affected parties. If not, we are truly one very large step to being a police state.