



Monday, April 26, 2021

RE: State of Oregon Hearing on HB 2343

Imperial Brown  
198 SE 223<sup>rd</sup> Ave  
Gresham OR 97030

Honorable Representative of the House,

I, Rex Plombon, a representative of Imperial Brown, Inc. am writing in support of HB 2343 to allow enterprise zone sponsors suspend employment requirements due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following points are of consequence that we ask your vote to approve:

- In June of 2019, Imperial Brown moved our office and manufacturing operations from our location in Portland, OR to Gresham, OR. We nearly doubled our size from 60,000 sq. ft. to 110,000 sq. ft. Because of our rapidly growing company, we needed the size to expand operations, with the intent of increasing our workforce and hiring the additional manufacturing staff to accommodate said growth. It was at this time we entered the Enterprise Zone Agreement with the City of Gresham.
- Our financial plan for 2020 plotted a course of a 22.6% increase in sales, supported by a larger facility and increase workforce. This included adding a second shift in our manufacturing facility. However, due to the economic downturn we ended up below plan by 15.7%, and have yet to add a second shift.
- In March/April of 2020, half of our customer base, which include food service dealers across the country, was decimated by the pandemic. In turn, our sales dropped drastically. Fortunately, with the help of the PPP loan provided by the SBA, Imperial Brown *was able to maintain all manufacturing staff* throughout the year.
- Despite the quick drop off in foodservice sales, our company was able to recover through other markets, and our sales remained steady. By October of 2020, order entry and demand were back on track, and even *exceed* our original sales projections for 2021. However, a roadblock has been preventing our growth: the ability to hire new employees is extremely difficult. In the last six months in particular, marketing attempts with temp agencies, online hiring brokers, and even an in-house incentive program have provided scant offerings of new employees. In addition, the generous government subsidies, such as unemployment, challenge our competitive starting wage to those making enough to get by without work.
- In summary, the pandemic curtailed our ability to hire new employees, but despite increasing demand from our customers, we continue to struggle. We have full confidence that, with our tangible growth in sight, reaching our employment covenants with the Enterprise Zone Agreement will be achieved. We simply need a pandemic-related buffer to get past. Thank you for your time to consider this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rex Plombon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rex Plombon  
Controller, Executive Secretary