

I am a partner at Westward Whiskey and my role is to manage our 4 tasting rooms in Oregon. We currently operate these tasting rooms at a loss. We've chosen to do that because we think that there is no better way to educate our consumers on our product and we hope that once they've experienced our products with us, they will go out to OLCC liquor stores and continue to purchase them. We operate our tasting rooms on a shoestring budget with limited staff to do everything we can to limit the financial hit we take each year. The way that we are required to pay the OLCC to sell our own products while shouldering all the costs associated with those sales is a huge business challenge. While we've decided to operate tasting rooms despite the financial loss they create, most distilleries cannot make this choice. By passing this bill, we will not only be able to change the financial hardship that tasting rooms create, we will be able to hire more Oregonians in a time when the state needs more jobs. There's no question in my mind that if we were not losing money, we would absolutely staff with more people. This bill isn't about making the rich even richer but rather about helping small business grow and employ more local people.

Similar to the amazing beer and wine industries of Oregon, we distillers are looking to be a big part of the Oregon economy. We are known throughout the world as amazing producers of beer and wine and we have all the agricultural ingredients and local people with the knowhow and desire to grow the distilling industry in a similar fashion. Our beer and wine counterparts have always used their tasting rooms to foster brand loyalty and grow their customer base into thriving businesses. We are asking for the same opportunity.

When Covid hit, as an industry we came together to make tons of hand sanitizer for the Oregon emergency services and other critical businesses and now we are asking you to help us so we can survive by making a profit, rather than losing money, in our tasting rooms and grow the Oregon economy.

We came so close to passing this bill last year and just missed the floor vote when the walk out happened. I hope you will help us get to the finish line this year.