

February 5, 2021

Dear Chair Manning and members of the committee,

We are writing today to express our support for SB 531.

The Klamath County Chamber of Commerce represents over 560 members who are committed growing business opportunities and providing living-wage jobs for families in our community. We support entrepreneurs and the jobs they create.

This past year has been a difficult one for our business community. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in wide-spread changes to our daily lives, and ultimately, on our ability to do business.

With the onset of COVID-19, Governor Brown issued Executive Order 20-12, which shuttered many of our local businesses in the interest of protecting public health and slowing the spread of this virus. These closures resulted in many businesses suffering extensive losses. It meant laying off employees, losing inventory, losing customers, and for some, it meant losing their business entirely.

Our community lost several restaurants including a steakhouse that couldn't pivot to take out (a more high end steakhouse with menu items that don't translate well) and has announced they cannot reopen. We have a local martini bar that was closed for nearly a year and when able to reopen recently struggled to get employees back. I hear stories daily from business owners that have been unable to bring back employees, who are behind on bills and don't know how they'll catch up, and are even at risk of losing their personal homes and autos because of the way their capital was leveraged.

When businesses are closed due to public health emergencies like COVID-19, it is important that the state help those businesses recover. Our local businesses are the life-blood of our community and our economy, especially our small and mid-sized businesses who have shouldered the greatest weight of these closures. We feel it is important for these businesses to be made whole. This is why we support SB 531.

SB 531 would allow businesses to be reimbursed for closures made during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses sacrificed their livelihoods in order to protect the health of Oregonians. In turn, we should help these businesses - and the jobs they provide - survive.

We hope you will stand with businesses in this state and support SB 531.

Sincerely,

Heather Tramp

Executive Director

Klamath County Chamber of Commerce

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