

As a front line health care worker, I am in opposition to HB3177. There are many reasons it is essential for legislators of good conscience to VOTE NO on this bill.

Mr. Smith claims to represent my rural, coastal district, but limiting the Governor's powers to make critical decisions based upon science and data while Coos County and others remain in Emergency status is callously insensitive to the burden rural communities and hospitals have borne during this crisis. If the restaurants and gyms in Coos County were capable of following rules regarding social distancing in the first place, none of these stricter measures would have been necessary. But, exempting certain industries that the bill's author is personally connected to is a populist ruse to appease a certain segment of the voting population -- no sensible person would vote for this -- not now. The actions this bill would outlaw were used as a last resort by our governor when an outspoken minority of members of these rural communities (and anywhere else) refused to do the right thing for themselves, over and over again, resulting in demonstrable disease and death. Oregon has been relatively lucky with per-capita case and death rates compared with the rest of the country precisely because of the swift actions of our governor.

In-person dining and going to an indoor gym is NOT ESSENTIAL. And, pretending it is, in communities that are overwhelmingly and increasingly elderly, is immoral and reckless.

There are countless ways to write a bill that actually supports these communities. For instance, why not concentrate this time and these resources to expanding vaccine availability in our rural areas to include elderly and vulnerable populations like the rest of the state? Why not fully fund rural emergency rooms? For the precious restaurants, why not fund take-out vouchers like was so successful in the UK? Why not fund mask availability to restaurant staff, just as the Oregon Department of Agriculture has made available to Ag workers and other Essential Persons? A more useful bill would perhaps fund a more robust inspection service that would confirm compliance with social distancing measures in these places when they do open back up. That would at least prevent the rural counties from suffering restaurant and bar-led case surges such as the Empire karaoke party that has infected hundreds in Coos County in just the last few weeks. Has anyone even considered a rent holiday for these businesses?

**\*\*Please vote NO on HB3177\*\*, stop blaming our governor for doing the right thing and work on solutions to get us out of this mess, not keep us all mired in this deadly crisis for the fiscal benefit of a small minority.**