



From the Desk of Ron Osmundson  
Redmond, OR 97756

Oregon House of Representatives  
Salem, OR 97301

February 23, 2021

**RE: Support for HB 3177 - Relating to emergency restrictions on businesses; declaring an emergency**

My fellow State Representatives,

This testimony comes before you today in **SUPPORT** of House Bill 3177 - the COVID Business Equity Act, relating to emergency restrictions on businesses; declaring an emergency.

I am a co-owner of an emergency daycare in Redmond, Oregon. At the height of the pandemic, we were susceptible to business closure and having to make arrangements for families to find new providers in the area, as we were just starting and fairly new business in Redmond. I have spoken to businesses and formed many relationships with business owners who have said it has been a struggle to stay afloat, make ends meet, or just close down to save whatever they can during my 2020 campaign as a Redmond City Councilor. Though I did not win my election bid, I have been mentoring businesses that need PPE supplies or find ways to keep them open, and offering assistance with PPE distribution with the City of Redmond. Last week, we distributed PPE supplies to over 30 Redmond businesses that have been struggling to stay open with much-needed support so that they can carry on their business matters safely.

When the Redmond City Council decided to write Governor Kate Brown a letter declaring Redmond's concerns about businesses being open, that letter was ultimately "thrown into a closet and never seen again" without any response. This is the letter that the Redmond City Council forwarded:

*"Dear Governor Brown;*

*On behalf of the many small and locally owned businesses in Redmond, Oregon, we request to be given the same re-opening consideration you have granted our school district which allows communities to re-open commerce in a safe manner, following CDC guidelines and demonstrates trust in the wisdom of our small businesses.*

*Redmond, Oregon, has more than 1,700 businesses throughout our Central Oregon community. Many of these are small and locally owned. They serve as the backbone of our city, a place where the entrepreneurial spirit runs strong. Their economic livelihood is reaching extinction as the public health pandemic continues into its 11th month. People are scared, angry, frustrated and confused.*

*They feel they have been abandoned by our state government, selectively eliminated from the economy, and left to survive by their own devices. Meanwhile, larger chain and big box stores are able to unfairly steal their customer base and their revenues, while these hardworking women and men are left to wither through no fault of their own. It has reached a breaking point. We as local elected officials must respond to their pleas for help and that is why we ask you to put in place a blueprint that allows them to more fully participate in the economy in a manner that respects the public health emergency but allows our sole proprietors to revive the businesses they have worked so hard to build and sustain. We stand with them.*

*To that end, we request you consider the following:*

*Adjust guidance for Counties in the “Extreme” category to allow them the flexibility to re-open with the schools.*

*Trust our communities and businesses to re-open in a manner that requires masks and physical distancing measures and frequent hand washing.*

*Allow our small businesses to tackle the safety measures with the same spirit they used to carve out their niche in private enterprise.*

*The Redmond City Council thanks you for the consideration of our request and we stand ready to meet with you and your team to discuss this further. Time is of the utmost essence, please help us as we strive to champion our local and small businesses. With warm regards.*

*Members of the Redmond City Council Redmond, Oregon.”*

Several businesses in Redmond (which will not be named) have decided to remain open though they knew they were going to be fined and so far those businesses have been fairing well, despite fines from OSHA or OLCC and legal challenges they face as they appear before a judge on the citations. There has been no COVID-19 outbreak from any Redmond restaurant or small business that has decided to stay open from tracing by Deschutes County. **ZERO**. There have been smaller outbreaks at chain stores and major big-box retailers that remain open to serve the general public. Fred Meyer in Redmond was fined \$700 for using unsafe COVID practices during the height of the pandemic. The research has proven that there are **ZERO** risks in opening all restaurants or small businesses to 100% operating capacity. Even in a declared emergency, small businesses and restaurants should act in the same capacity as big box or chain retail stores.

As such, I am in **SUPPORT** of passing the COVID Business Equity Act, House Bill 3177, with insurmountable support from the House, on both sides of the aisle, both House Democrats and Republicans. Oregon needs to open to 100% capacity and operation if a sense of normalcy can be achieved with the cases in all counties and restrictions being lowered.

Best regards,



Ron Osmundson  
Redmond Community Business Leader and Advocate