



Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I have worked in the music industry over 20 years and have had consistently watched our industry grow and change during that time, but nothing has affected this business more than the Pandemic. Covid has reached right into the heart of what we do and ripped it out. We were closed for 18 months with no idea on what the future was going to look like, or if we would ever come back to hosting live music ever again. It was terrible feeling like we were all alone and unable to help ourselves or fellow businesses.

The worst part of Covid was interrupting that momentum we had gained over the years. It was like starting all over. We lost the dedicated fan base, we lost the artists that visited us regularly and inspired new artists to come to Portland, we lost employees, vendors, equipment began failing from lack of use, we lost tours, we lost community support over the length of time it was taking to reopen, and we lost that feeling we all remembered when attending a live music event. We no longer knew what it was like to be in a room with a lot of other people relaxing and enjoying ourselves while being entertained.

The landscape of our business has been forever altered by this Pandemic. After 2019 we have experienced more cancelled shows than ever before, we currently have been struggling to remedy the extreme low amount of shows we currently have on our calendar which was not an issue in 2019, ticket sales are way down as well and do not seem to be getting better, and on top of that we are seeing an average 20% of customers attending most of our events. All of our expenses, payroll and employee taxes, utilities, business and property taxes all are more expensive than 2019. We never had a chance to grow into that inflation. We were expected to just find the ability to make up the difference and carry on, but there is no way to do that when your business is not what it was or on the same trajectory as it was in 2019.

We are still recovering and having difficulty getting the artists back. Inflation and gas prices have halted so many tours and overseas acts from being able to get to Portland to play, and once they do there is not enough money to get them to the next stop. So many shows were cancelled due to Covid whether it was someone on tour getting Covid, low to no ticket sales during a Covid surge, or agents not wanting their acts to tour through Covid hot spots. We have spent so much time, money, and energy on Covid testing, preventative air cleaning measures, masking, cleaning, and refunding customers who did not feel safe in a space with a large number of people.

We have taken a huge loss in our concessions by lack of attendance, and customers not having the financial ability to buy the ticket and food and beverages as well. We need the help of the Oregon Legislature to help us be able to host events where we can eliminate the barriers that concession rules and regulations by the OLCC has put on our events. We can have events that nurture the inter-generational enjoyment of art and live music by eliminating the separation of the room between all ages and 21 and over patrons. This would allow us to no longer have to book our events based on age demographics, and it would bridge the generational gap of entertainment preferences and expose all ages to new and exciting forms of entertainment. This would influence more performers to play a variety of rooms in Portland and increase business opportunities for all live music venues.

Portland has been hit hard by the Pandemic. Rent is sky high, businesses in the hospitality field are closing at an alarming rate, inflation has taken hold, and gas prices wiped many people out just trying to get to work everyday, so there is nothing left financially for a person to enjoy some live entertainment and escape from a stressful life.

This new year we face so many difficulties in maintaining any kind of consistency in booking, staffing, estimating costs, and trying to stay competitive with living wages to keep our current employees and attract new hires. We need to have a more inclusive set of protections and assistance to continue to bring art, culture, and entertainment to Portland. We are a part of this city's identity and the fabric of its creativity and artistic expression. We are one of the many places that give Portland the ability to invite and host so many people from around the world to enjoy the beauty of the Pacific Northwest by entertaining them with our food, art, music, and views.

All of us who host and invest ourselves and our businesses in entertaining the masses need to be a part of the conversation and solutions in bringing revenue and unforgettable experiences to not only those who visit Portland, but those who live here as well. We must remember that music crosses all borders, it brings together a diverse amount of demographics, heightens the awareness and experiences of moments in history, comforts us in times of loss and defeat, inspires us in endless ways, and celebrates our victories and life moments. We are a community that needs action and support. We need to continue what we set out to do, and that is to inspire people and togetherness, and to facilitate the enjoyment of art and entertainment for everyone in a non-stop unrelenting world of chaos.

Best,
Kat Lovesky
General Manager
Wonder Ballroom
Kat@wonderballroom.com