

Hello members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is Emily Jensen, I am the co-owner and founder of Thinking Tree Spirits a craft distillery in Eugene, Oregon.

I'd like to share with you the origin story of our start-up, small business in hopes that it will reveal how crucial an Oregon Spirit Board could be to our overall success and survival. January 1st of 2014, I set forth writing a business plan to open the first distillery in Eugene. Over 2 years, I gathered smart people, chose investors inspired by the idea, found and renovated a 100 year old building and we hand hammered our own pot stills to create our first product and open our tasting room doors in time for Christmas of 2016.

We are women led and community powered and committed to this vision, "We endeavor to bring People together! Let's use spirits as a conduit to create the world we want to live in!"

For us that meant a sustainable farm to flask distillery.

We source our wheat from Camas Country Mills, our Botanicals from Mountain Rose Herbs, our berries from Johnson Family Farms, our peaches from Me and More Farms, our honey from Glory Bee. The list goes on and on....We've created products like our Bees Knees, Bottled Ready to drink Cocktail to put profits toward the SAVE the BEE Foundation to help protect pollinators. This is one of the many ways in which we have chosen to commit to Oregon's economy and overall success.

Our spirits have received national recognition. Oregon Gin Distillery of the Year at New York International, all Gold medals at San Francisco Spirits, Los Angeles Spirits Competition and Sip NorthWest Spirits Competition.

As you may remember in 2020 we were the first distillery to federally legalize the making of hand-sanitizer for ALL craft distilleries nation wide in response to the pandemic and we along with New Deal in Portland and Oregon Spirit Distillers in Bend retooled our businesses to produce 100,000 proof gallons of sanitizer for Oregon Health Authority, upon the request of the State.

For a craft distillery in Oregon to survive. It is essential that we attain distribution of our products into other states. Our growth and survival has been made possible by the stalwart support of our investors of which I have had to pursue 4 rounds of funding. We never laid a single person off in the last 4 years, we employ 20 people in Eugene, Bend and Portland all with the option for comprehensive health care.

After 2 long years pursuing distribution (shutdowns, lockdowns, supply chain shortages) we finally have found it in Dallas, Texas. We sought and secured the expensive help of a strategic partner to assist me over a full year in getting sought after meetings. We spent months on zooms, countless miles driven to 3 states, 8 months of regular flights to Florida, Texas and California pitching the prospect of our small brand being a viable bet for these distributors to partner with. It could be argued that between our time and the cost of doing business our company spent \$100,000 to secure our first distribution deal.

As the Vice President of the Oregon Distillers Guild I can confidently testify that securing distribution is the single hardest and largest challenge all our distilleries face and it's critical to our businesses path to profitability.

To paint the picture best: There are more people in Dallas/Fort Worth than the entire state of Oregon. It took us 6 years to get 100 independent liquor stores in Oregon, it took us 6 weeks to get 100 liquor stores in Texas. While the margins are slim and the path ahead is steep. With alcohol being the 3rd largest contributor to the general fund for the state of Oregon. Finally, I am proud to say we are starting to receive and cash Texas checks to make our Oregon payroll.

I implore you to dream big with us. How much good can we ALL do for Oregon, if you allow us to capture our own money and put it to work to help distilleries like mine bring out of state dollars into our economy. We need your help and we need your common sense to pass House Bill 2976.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to share my experience.

Sincerely,

Emily Jensen