

Esteemed members of the Lane County legislative delegation,

We are asking for your support on an issue that is of dire importance to our region; to the health and safety of our citizens and to our fragile economy. With the unexpected onset of the COVID pandemic, businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, governments, transit providers and other entities responded immediately to the direction of our Governor and the Oregon Health Authority in order to protect our citizens. We continue to shift and adapt on a daily basis as recommendations are refined and are working collaboratively to reopen in order to serve our communities and preserve our regional economy.

As we continue to work to cautiously reopen, it is critical that we can do so without the fear of potential lawsuits from individuals who may contract COVID through no intention or act of carelessness on the part of the businesses, governments or other entities serving the public. We are committed to following the guidelines set forth by the Oregon Health Authority and in doing so, we ask for your support in providing important limited liability protections.

Many of us receive funding from general fund sources, which would be jeopardized in the event that litigation becomes costly. We appreciate every citizens' legal right to pursue their grievances, but if it implies negligence at a time when we are working diligently and in good faith to respond to evolving information and circumstances, we cannot support putting the health and safety of our citizens or our economy at risk.

Protection from limited liability would encourage employers to follow OHA recommendations and guidelines because in doing so, they would be protected against lawsuits. Liability protections would also serve to incentivize widespread workplace testing to aid in addressing the virus.

The protection we are seeking would only be applicable to those entities who under the direction of this Governor, are following the best practices outlined by the Oregon Health Authority and her administration. It would not cover willful misconduct, gross negligence or any protections for entities not working to comply with established guidelines.

There is still so much information that we don't know about this virus and businesses and organizations are all doing our best to follow the guidelines and evolve and respond in an ever-changing landscape. Adherence to those guidelines is best incentivized by granting safe harbor from claims of gross negligence.

Please make liability protections for businesses, governments, healthcare organizations and all other entities serving the public, a priority for the Special Session.

Thank you,

Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
City of Eugene
City of Springfield

Lane Transit District
Lane County
Lane Community College
Willamalane

