June 17, 2020

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek, Co-Chair, Legislative Emergency Board
Senate President Peter Courtney, Co-Chair, Legislative Emergency Board
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Speaker Kotek, President Courtney and Members of the Joint Emergency Board,

I am writing to express Travel Oregon’s support for Oregon’s independently owned venues. Travel Oregon’s vision is a better life for all Oregonians through strong, sustainable local communities that welcome a diversity of explorers. This includes enhancing economies throughout the state to help communities leverage their local, regional and state tourism economy. As such, we are strongly supportive of preserving attractions and businesses that increase visitation and help fuel local economies and keeping them from shuttering permanently as we navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

The entire state is experiencing significant economic losses due to the spread of COVID-19. Oregon is unique in that every one of the 77 venues in the state is independently owned and there are no outside corporate interests. These businesses, both for-profit and nonprofit, are “dedicated” institutions: their entire income derives from ticketed events. When the pandemic hit, these businesses were among the first closed, and will be some of the last to open under the governor’s phased reopening.

Money spent in these venues goes directly into the local economy. Studies indicate that the economic impact when people go out to see a show is immense. In 2017, Oregon received an estimated 10 million overnight leisure travelers who visited historic places and participated in one or more art and culture related activities. That represents nearly 30 percent of the yearly overnight marketable trips to Oregon. These are venues that are located across the state – from the Historic Rogue Theatre in Grants Pass to the Cuthbert Amphitheater in Eugene to the Belfry in Sisters – these venues provide Oregonians the opportunity to grow up learning about arts and culture and visitors the opportunity to engage in unique Oregon experience while on their trip.

Supporting businesses like these venues will crucial as local communities begin to recover from the devastating economic impacts of COVID-19. These venues will be a significant part of the local tourism economy’s healthy recovery. Travel Oregon strongly supports preserving and aiding businesses to ensure they are ready and able to welcome visitors when it is time to do so.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Todd Davidson
CEO, Travel Oregon