

Oregon Business Community Statement: COVID-19 Economic Response Plan to Mitigate Harm to Employees and Employers and to Protect the Future of Jobs in Oregon

Governor Brown and Oregon's legislative leaders are initiating bold actions to reduce the spread of coronavirus across our state. Our first priority must be protecting the health of all Oregonians, and Oregon businesses are committed to following the protocols set out by our state's leaders. Now is the time to plan for and mitigate the astonishing economic disruption that has accompanied this health crisis. Today, Oregon businesses are focused on ensuring their employees get paid as revenues decline, as well as how businesses can survive and protect jobs in the months ahead. Many face required or self-initiated closures, slow-downs, interrupted supply chains and much more.

Unless it is addressed swiftly, this economic impact could have long-term devastating effects throughout Oregon. Here are some steps we urge the Governor and the Legislature to take to get ahead of the situation:

1. Establish regular lines of communication between business and Oregon leaders to have regular updates and strategy discussions and create sector-by-sector response teams.
2. Create a small business crisis line to triage calls from employers to access help from state agencies.
3. Prioritize the stability and accessibility of the Unemployment Insurance Fund:
 - Consider transferring the 2019 corporate kicker to the Unemployment Insurance fund.
 - Create immediate access for workers displaced by business closures and slow-downs.
 - Eliminate job search requirements for unemployment insurance, as well as one-week waiting periods for benefits.
 - Lift requirement that employees be employed for six months to trigger Workshare benefit eligibility.
4. Recognizing the cash-flow crisis facing businesses across the state, delay implementation of the new Corporate Activities Tax, at least for the first quarter of 2020, so those funds can be diverted to meeting payroll and protecting jobs. Extend the delay through the second quarter if the coronavirus crisis continues.
5. Identify other opportunities to relieve the financial burden on industry sectors impacted by this crisis to facilitate job protection and business continuity, including:
 - Ask local governments either to put a hold on new tax measures, pending resolution of the coronavirus crisis or to work with their local business communities to consider delaying or changing implementation strategies.
 - Suspend payroll taxes for small businesses.
 - Institute a moratorium on the weight-mile for trucking firms playing a critical role in delivering supplies and consider reduction in corporate minimum taxes.
 - Create a tax credit for restaurants and lodging operations along with other facilities that issue refunds for cancelled events.
 - Ensure home supply, hardware and convenience stores fall within the retail exemption for mandated closures. Include food manufactures and beverage distributors on a list of critical suppliers exempt from potential closures.
 - Create incentives, including tax credits, for investments in job retention, extended paid time off and remote work opportunities.
6. Extend tax filing deadlines.
7. Direct Business Oregon to prioritize businesses impacted by the coronavirus crisis for low-interest and no-interest loan assistance.
8. Temporarily lift maximum hours restriction in manufacturing.
9. Relax predictive scheduling requirements and enact moratorium on penalties.

10. Protect employers from increased rates and penalties when employees make claims for unemployment due to reduced hours or business closures.
11. Take steps to facilitate the movement of vital supplies, including food, medicine, health care equipment, etc., to market so consumer needs can be met.
12. Require state agencies including the Oregon Health Authority, BOLI, Employment, Transportation, Lottery, Revenue, and Secretary of State create resource sites for employers.
13. Extend deadlines or lift requirements for regulations that are impracticable or impossible to comply with in this time of crisis, i.e., training requirements when training can't be delivered, prohibition on self-service gasoline service, etc.
14. Establish a moratorium on new rulemakings that are not necessary as a result of the coronavirus crisis so that all attention can be focused on this health crisis. This provision does not include rulemaking to repeal or satisfy and appeal of an existing rule.

