



January 20, 2024

To: Governor Kotek, Mayors and County Commissioners of all storm impacted communities

From: Independent Restaurant Alliance of Oregon

Re: The Urgent Need for Recovery Assistance

Independent restaurants and bars in Oregon urgently need your attention to address the significant economic crisis resulting from the January 2024 storms. Over 60% of independent food service establishments surveyed have indicated that storm closures are catastrophic to their business operations and they're at risk of permanent closure without immediate assistance from local and regional governments.

Our businesses are integral to creating vibrant communities. Food service businesses in Oregon directly employ more than 185,000 people and indirectly, we employ thousands more through a robust supply chain from farmers and fishermen to brewers and winemakers, distributors to florists and numerous other service providers. Every dollar spent in an Oregon restaurant contributes \$2 to the state's economy.

The recent winter storms have left many of our businesses grappling with staggering revenue losses ranging from \$30,000 to \$75,000. These losses not only jeopardize the immediate survival of our business but also have profound effects on the incomes of our hardworking employees. On average we employ 20 individuals who are suffering with an average income loss of approximately \$1500. Compensating our teams as if they'd taken paid time off still leaves them short at least 20 hours of pay. While our restaurants will struggle to pay vendors, our employees will struggle to pay rent.

Considering the substantial role that the restaurant and bar industry plays in Oregon's economy, these losses have far-reaching implications for the economic well-being of our state.

Independent restaurants anchor neighborhoods and communities across Oregon. We serve as a tourist attraction, marketers of Oregon products, supporters of schools and Little Leagues and we are the first to step up to feed our neighbors in times of crisis. In order for us to continue to serve our communities again we implore you to utilize emergency orders to the fullest extent and prioritize the following survival strategies:



- Suspend payroll tax and all city and state business taxes for restaurants, bars, and food carts of fewer than 100 employees for 90 days.
- Place a moratorium on commercial evictions after January 18, 2024 for a period of three months.
- Create a relief fund specifically designed to assist independent restaurants, food carts and bars with fewer than 100 employees who have been forced to close for more than two days in recovering from financial setbacks caused by extreme weather events. This fund should provide grants, low-interest loans, or other forms of financial assistance to ensure the survival of our establishments.
- Allocate resources to ensure proper road maintenance during winter storms, including the use of de-icer, salt, sand, and an increased number of trucks on the road. Timely and effective road treatment is essential to prevent closures that directly impact the operations of our businesses.
- Work closely with local utility companies to manage the urban canopy, reducing the number of power outages caused by downed trees during storms. Demand improved response times to outages by crucial utilities such as power and water to minimize disruptions to our operations.

It is long past time for city and state leaders to acknowledge that extreme weather events are not an anomaly. We must invest in infrastructure to navigate these challenges. We believe that taking these proactive measures will not only support the recovery of our businesses but also contribute to the overall resilience of Oregon's economy. We are ready and eager to engage in further discussions and collaboration to address these critical issues.

You must act quickly, without immediate assistance our neighborhood restaurants and bars will not survive.