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For Immediate Release
March 16, 2020

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Oregon Legislature People of Color Caucus Highlight Resources for Small Business Owners

SALEM – Small businesses and the Oregonians who work for them are grappling with the impacts of coronavirus-related closures. The State of Oregon, through the Employment Department and Business Oregon, have a range of tips and resources for small business owners and their employees to get through this challenging time.

“Small businesses are the backbone of Oregon’s economy, employing 55 percent of our private workforce,” said Rep. Akasha Lawrence Spence (D-Portland), a small business owner. “They are a powerful yet simultaneously fragile estuary in our economic landscape. We must act as rapid revenue loss is compounded for women and POC businesses who already have a hard time gaining access to much-needed funds when there is no global health crisis. We need our state agencies to allocate meaningful subsidies to these small businesses now.”

Small businesses that have had to reduce the amount of hours employees work by 20 to 40 percent may be eligible to participate in the Workshare program. This program enables employees to receive unemployment benefits while they are still working under reduced hours. This can serve as a lifeline, but employers must sign-up and initiate this process for employees to gain benefits. The Oregon Employment Department has helpful resources and answers to frequently asked questions, [available here](#).

In addition, Business Oregon has a number of tips and resources available for small business owners on their coronavirus response page, [available here](#).

"The range of issues associated with this pandemic reaches across our community, with those already struggling facing more challenges," said Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland). "Minority families and businesses have even fewer alternatives to decreases in salary and cuts in the number of customers a small business experiences."

"During difficult times like these, among our most negatively impacted are our small businesses that are small, family-owned, mom-and-pop shops, and restaurants that represent the character and diversity of our communities" said Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn). "We must stand together, support them, and return the favor when we need them most. Continue to shop local, and let our small businesses know how much we appreciate what they bring to our communities."

The Legislative POC Caucus extends appreciation for the efforts of the business community, Built Oregon, Business for a Better Portland, APANO, and other community-based organizations who are doing the work to help small businesses navigate these uncertain times.

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