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Committee Members -

Thank you for your time today. First of all, I would like to start out by saying that I and many other Kansans realize that the last couple of months have been nothing short of a disaster for our state, which has left no industry unaffected and unharmed.

Having said that, I am here today to tell you about the first-hand consequences of the arbitrary and uneven decisions that have been made over the last few months and the effects these decisions have had on my family's business, our industry and our employees and customers. First, some quick background on my business.

Billy's Ayr Lanes got our start back in 2007. We started out as a small barbeque restaurant and slowly grew the business through hard work and determination. With the tremendous support of our community and exceptional growth, Billy's purchased Ayr Lanes in 2014. We have won many awards over the years, including Kansas Business of the Year. We are a locally-grown business and a true small business success story, not only for our community but also for the state of Kansas.

Sadly, these days are now not so bright for Billy's. The arbitrary and uneven decisions in the Governor's reopening plan have been nothing short of a disaster for our industry, our employees, our customers and my family. Business losses are quickly reaching into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Employee jobs are in jeopardy and what was once an overwhelming success story is quickly turning into another statistic!

Due to the executive orders, our business has now been severely limited or completely shut down for about two months. Many other bowling centers and restaurants have been affected for an even longer period of time. To add more pain to this situation, these limitations and shut downs have come during what would normally have been the peak season for the bowling alley industry.

Bowling is an indoor business, which means we have to earn revenue and put away savings during the peak portions of the year in order to survive the season downturn in our much slower summer months. Unfortunately, when the first executive orders were handed down, we were just entering the middle of our peak season, which would have allowed us to store away revenue to pay taxes and weather the slower summer months.

While thousands of Kansas small businesses like ours have been restricted or shut down under these executive orders, big box retail stores, meat packing plants and many other businesses have been deemed essential and allowed to remain fully operational during this time. So, while other businesses are allowed to continue to operate at full capacity, bowling centers have been ordered to continue to be closed! With her reopening plans, the Governor has basically created winners and losers among Kansas businesses!

When the Governor rolled out her reopening plan several weeks ago, it was a very tough pill to swallow, but it gave us a light at the end of the tunnel and some limited hope that we would be allowed to open our business again. Even though other states have now pushed forward with reopening businesses (with almost no reported unintended consequences and spikes in confirmed cases) and Kansas is starting to achieve the criteria laid out in the Governor's plan, we are still dragging our feet on getting people back to work and business back open in the state of Kansas!

Quite frankly, other states have done a much better job at doing large-scale testing and allowing businesses to reopen and employees to get back to work on a much quicker timeline than our state. I must ask, why can't we now do the same in Kansas?

During the first phase of the reopening plan, nothing changed for the big box retail stores. Business continued to boom while mom and pop small businesses remained shuttered and continue to struggle to pay the bills and keep the doors open.

However, bowling alleys and many other Kansas small businesses have been ordered to remain shut while other businesses have been allowed to reopen on a much faster timeline. Customers can now come in to my business, they can sit down, eat and drink in tables of less than ten with plenty of spaces between tables to meet the distancing requirements. My employees stand ready to abide by the appropriate health and sanitation requirements to provide a safe experience for our customers.

Even if we do all of these things, the arbitrary reopening plan that is in place today does not allow my customers to walk over to the bowling alley and roll a ball down the lane. There is no shortage of space in our bowling alley and there would be absolutely no problems in creating a safe, appropriately distanced environment for our bowling customers. In spite of all this, the reopening plan won't even give us a chance to reopen for business!

As you can imagine, revenue derived from bowling operations makes up for a considerable portion of the income for our business. Bowling leagues have now been canceled, our summer seasons will most likely be canceled as well and that revenue will be lost and many small business owners like me will never recover! Of course, mortgage payments, insurance premiums, utility bills and taxes continue to accrue and be payable during these periods, whether we are open for business or not!

The employees at Billy's have been nothing short of exceptional during these challenging times. Having to stand up and assure them that things will be okay while looking down the barrel of disaster has been an especially difficult thing to do. We care about our employees.

Every day, I worry about the hard-working mother of three children that derives her entire income from waiting tables in our business because it allows her the flexibility to keep day care costs down. I worry about the high school senior or college student that is working after school to help pay for their education. I worry about my cooks that know if you don't have the same volume of business, staff and hours will surely have to be cut.

All of these issues will not be solved overnight when we are allowed to reopen for business. We need customers! As responsible and dedicated small business owners, we can handle the sanitation and social distancing orders that have been handed down if we are given the opportunity to reopen our doors for business. Our employees have the training and desire to ensure our customers will continue to be safe.

All we ask is that the state stop picking winners and losers among Kansas businesses! Bowling alleys like mine are ready to reopen to serve our customers and we will have no problem in abiding by any health and sanitation requirements we need to implement to help protect our customers. Please help me reopen the doors of my small business and help me put my employees back to work!

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best regards,

Kelly Hill